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ABSTRACT

This guide is intended to help public-school educators, policy makers, and others develop a school desegregation plan. The guide presents the basic features of the Controlled Choice Student-Assignment Plan, which was developed to achieve student-body diversity, provide choice regarding one's school of enrollment, and promote school improvement. The plan embraces the notion of complementarity, wherein opposites are attracted and completed by each other and thereby serve as mutual enhancements. The volume explores the value of organizing the delivery of educational services by neighborhoods and looks at alternatives to neighborhood schools. The plan is presented in four chapters. Chapter 1 examines the principles and assumptions of Controlled Choice, such as the idea that risks for good public-school experiences and against bad public-school experiences should be shared in an equitable way. Chapter 2 describes design and implementation strategies for Controlled Choice, emphasizing the importance of a planning process that is open to everyone. Chapter 3 then turns to community organization theory, outlining the strategy of establishing a structure that can harmonize formal authority that travels from top to bottom and from bottom to top. The last chapter details how Controlled Choice worked in Boston, Massachusetts, where a Controlled Choice Student Assignment Plan was initiated in 1989. (RJM)

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Controlled Choice

A New Approach To Desegregated Education and School Improvement

ED 430 265

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by Charles V. Willie, Ph.D, Harvard University, and Michael Alves, New England Desegregation Assistance Center

A Publication of the Education Alliance Press and the New England Desegregation Assistance Center

Controlled Choice

A New Approach to
School Desegregated Education and
School Improvement

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A publication of the Education Alliance Press and the New England Desegregation Assistance Center

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Dr. Willie has written on a broad range of topics impacting upon the sociological trends in American life, focusing in recent years on "Controlled Choice" as a new and innovative model for school desegregation.

In his long and distinguished career in higher education, Dr. Willie has received numerous citations and awards and has received honorary degrees from Yale, Harvard, Johnson C. Smith and Syracuse Universities; Morehouse, Rhode Island, and Framingham Colleges; and the Episcopal General Seminary in New York.

Since 1975, he has been a consultant, witness, master, and expert on school desegregation nationwide.

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Preface

Controlled Choice: A New Approach to Desegregated Education and School Improvement is both a guide to developing a school desegregation plan for the '90s and a snapshot of successful implementation.

Charles Vert Willie and Michael Alves have combined their many years of collaboration and spawned a document that is both extraordinarily timely and especially relevant as the demographics of public schools undergo rapid change.

The body of the text lays out the theoretical framework that forms the basis of "Controlled Choice." Appendix 1 is an extensive illustration of the issues confronting the practitioner in a case study of the Boston plan. Appendix 2 presents the review of an independent evaluation of the results of the Boston effort.

This guide is published to inform public school educators, policy makers, and all those who search for a more equitable public school environment for all students.

Willie and Alves present a theory of desegregation that is rooted in experience and offer a model that speaks to the process which guarantees fairness and quality of education for all. Most importantly, "Controlled Choice" is a model, that when properly applied, simply works.

The New England Desegregation Assistance Center at Brown University, since 1993, has been committed to fostering equity in the public schools of the region through focusing technical assistance and training

on the issues of race, gender, and national origin as a consequence of desegregation.

The authors of this document have played a major role in the NEDAC's development of desegregation plans — Willie as a consultant and advisor, Alves as a staff member.

The NEDAC, then, is pleased and proud through the Education Alliance for Equity and Excellence in the Nation's Schools and its Education Alliance Press to add this important document to the nation's efforts to achieve equity for all of its students.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the 1954 *Brown* decision by the U.S. Supreme Court that prohibited intentional, state-sponsored segregation in public education, parents, pupils, professional educators, politicians, public administrators and the public have been experimenting with ways of complying with this court-order and it's effects. This momentous court-order declared that governmental policies and practices that intentionally segregate students by race are illegal because segregated schools "are inherently unequal" (Brown I, 1954).

The Court clearly stated in *Brown II* (1955) that the Constitutional principles disallowing intentional, state-sponsored segregation in public schools "cannot be allowed to yield simply because of disagreement with them." However, the court-order gave primary responsibility for solving the problem of segregated education to school authorities and required District Courts in which school desegregation cases originated to give "judicial appraisal" to the efforts of local education agencies, considering the adequacy of their plans and determining if their efforts constitute "good faith implementation of governing constitutional principles." (Brown II 1955).

Ralph McGill said that "[the] phrasing of the [Supreme Court] decision, rationally anticipated that the knowledge and skill of educators...and of the social sciences would assume direction of the process of desegregation" (McGill 1964:249). In an article published in 1976, Robert Crain laments the failure of social science and of social scientists to conduct research studies that would provide practical guidelines for practitioners faced with implementing school desegregation plans (Crain 1976). This manual on the principles and the procedures of a controlled choice student assignment plan is offered as a correction for some of the omissions of the past in applied social science.

From the late 1960s through the decade of the 1970s, the Court and the Congress tried to provide some guidelines on how to achieve school desegregation. In *Green v. School Board* (1968) the Court ruled that school districts have an affirmative obligation to achieve desegregation beyond merely refraining from enforcing segregation. In *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* (1971), Federal District Courts were granted authority to order the assignment of teachers on a non-segregative basis, forbid school construction and school closings that perpetuate segregation, impose flexible racial quotas as a

starting point in the shaping of a workable desegregation plan, alter school attendance zones, and require the use of transportation to achieve a unitary school system. Finally, in *Keyes v. School District No. 1* (1973) the Court ruled that proof of intentional segregation in a substantial part of a system is sufficient evidence that the entire system is segregated and, therefore, is obligated to prepare a district-wide desegregation plan. Moreover, the Court sanctioned the designation of Hispanics as minorities who cannot be counted as members of the majority population in a plan to desegregate the public schools. In these cases, fourteen to nineteen years after the *Brown* decision, the Court increasingly provided explicit guidelines on how to achieve school desegregation (Zirkel 1978). The limitations of this approach, however, is that the Court provided the guidelines incrementally. These guidelines had a positive effect, although they were late in coming.

According to Robert Dentler, "the period of peak action toward large-scale and substantial school desegregation ran from 1966 [to 1976] when the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) became executive agency initiators, regulators, and enforcers of progress toward compliance with *Brown* and the 1964 Civil Rights Act" (Dentler 1991:33). Florence Levinsohn reports that "[there has been] much more peaceful school desegregation than violent" (Levinsohn 1976). Confirming this observation, Willis Hawley found that the increased interracial contacts resulting from school desegregation is friendly more often than not (Hawley 1981:148). Also, there is evidence that the quality of education improved during the era of the most intense school desegregation activity. The *Phi Delta Kappan* annual survey revealed that in 1976 only 5 percent of parents of public school children evaluated their schools as failures (Elam 1978:261). On the positive side, the proportion of school-age children in school, graduating from high school and attending college, increased during this period. And during the height of the public school desegregation movement, a 50 percent decline in the drop-out rate of black students was noted (Hawley quoting Taeuber and Wilson 1981:146). Despite some negative comments that have been made about this period in United States history, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Executive Editor of *Ebony* called the sixties "one of the greatest decades of the century" and further said, "this decade gave rise to a new climate of race relations in this country" (Bennett, Jr. 1992:38).

Notwithstanding these gains, the Court in 1976 opened the door for some formerly segregated school systems that had experienced court-ordered school desegregation to return to operating segregated schools, if they could prove that the racial segregation they manifested was "wholly adventitious" (Viera 1978:87). The Pasadena, California School District made this claim in *Pasadena City Board of Education v. Spangler* (1976), that school authorities were not obli-

gated to further desegregate a system if it had experienced a measure of resegregation due to changing residential patterns. This claim was sustained by the Court. Based on this ruling, other communities began to slide back from continuous attempts to maintain the level of desegregation that they had achieved. Since this ruling of the Court has been applied to other school districts, it is clear that new guidelines in addition to those that the Court has provided in the past are necessary to assist school districts that wish to maintain student assignment plans that desegregates all schools and all population groups.

The Controlled Choice Student Assignment Plan was developed to achieve these and several other goals. It can be implemented effectively with or without a court-order. Although using many of the existing methods and techniques of achieving a unitary school system, Controlled Choice embraces these methods and techniques in a new and different way. The uniqueness of Controlled Choice is that it guarantees student body diversity, provides choice regarding school of enrollment, and promotes school improvement simultaneously. Moreover, it is comprehensive and solves the issue presented to the Court in the Pasadena case and other similar cases because it prevents resegregation even when school districts experience substantial demographic changes.

This book presents the basic features of Controlled Choice, including design and implementation strategies, and also discusses the social science assumptions on which the plan is based.

The plan embraces the notion of complementarity, wherein opposites are attracted and completed by each other and thereby serve as mutual enhancements.

Choice has to do with freedom and control has to do with restraint. Choice is effective when it exists within the context of community restraint. And control is effective when it facilitates individual freedom. Thus, control and choice enhance each other in a student assignment plan.

Beyond discussing the beneficial effects of the co-existence of freedom and restraint, partial and incremental versus comprehensive and simultaneous planning for school desegregation will be analyzed.

We explore the value, if any, of organizing the delivery of educational services by neighborhoods and look at alternatives to neighborhood schools. Also, we discuss the conditions under which students and their parents prefer schools nearby or distant from their homes.

Finally, the discussion of these features of effective schooling is linked to the concept of fairness. The book ends with an evaluation of Controlled Choice in Boston.

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Chapter 1

Principles and Assumptions

Controlled Choice differs from other methods of achieving school desegregation because it is comprehensive and immediate, not piecemeal and incremental. John Dewey's idea–"what the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all its children" (Dewey 1900) is an appropriate goal of Controlled Choice. This is but another way of saying that education as a means of individual enhancement and education as a means of community advancement must go hand in hand.

Basic Assumptions of Controlled Choice

A basic assumption of the Controlled Choice method of student assignment is that every child, and every child's group should have access to all educational opportunities that a community offers and that no child and no child's group should be educationally disadvantaged because of personal or situational circumstances. If a community maintains any educational services and experiences that are harmful to children, these should not be restricted to any particular population group. Risks for good public school experiences and against bad public school experiences should be shared in an equitable way among all children in a community.

Controlled Choice introduces the concept of population group that many in the United States have difficulty accepting as relevant. This society has attempted to offer opportunities to individuals without realizing that people live, move and have their being within the context of groups. According to the wisdom of sociology, effective individuals, in part, derive their effectiveness from the groups with which they affiliate and in which they participate. Likewise, effective groups derive their effectiveness, in part, from the skills and performance of their members. All of this is to say that individuals operate within the context of social organization. Without it, human beings could not survive. Thus, Controlled Choice provides educational opportunities for individuals and Controlled Choice provides educational opportunities for groups.

Controlled Choice provides educational opportunities for individuals by permitting each student to choose a number of schools that he or she would like to attend and to rank-order these by personal preference. Regardless of one's residential neighborhood, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, aptitude

or other attributes, each student may choose any school in the city or any school in a large zone of the city.

The comprehensive citywide or zonewide educational offerings of Controlled Choice sever the hostage relationship between real estate market forces and personal educational opportunities. With Controlled Choice, an individual's schooling opportunities are no longer constrained or facilitated by one's capacity to rent or purchase housing near to or distant from a preferred school. Controlled Choice operates on the premise that schools are public and should be available to everyone, while housing is private and it's use is, therefore, limited to an individual or a family of individuals. Thus, the Controlled Choice method assumes that schooling opportunities should not be dependent upon one's financial capacity to rent or purchase various housing accommodations. Indeed, Controlled Choice prevents these experiences from being linked by ensuring that all schools are available to all students.

Controlled Choice provides comprehensive educational opportunities to population groups by insisting that groups with which individuals chose to identify and that are recognized by the school system should receive proportional access to all public educational opportunities provided. If school assignments were made in a random way, this would occur automatically. Since individuals are granted the freedom of choosing schools, this individual freedom must be constrained by reserving seats for groups. This method is fair to individuals and to groups. Moreover, by reserving a proportion of school seats for members of various population groups, Controlled Choice ensures the presence of a critical mass of students unlike the prevailing group and thereby guarantees diversity in all schools.

Freedom and Constraint

Freedom and constraint are two important and essential functions in social organization. They complement each other and control excesses of groups and individuals. The allocation of seats within all schools by groups is a way of constraining some individuals from grabbing all of the goodies (educational opportunities) before others are able to access them. Permitting individuals to choose the schools they will attend is a way of freeing them from their group constraints. Group constraints come in many forms such as race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, residential location and so on.

As stated earlier, the essential components of Controlled Choice are student body diversity, personal choice, and school improvement. These components of educational reform are not new. What is new is the requirement in Controlled Choice that these three components should be implemented simultaneously and not incrementally.

Incremental, Simultaneous, and Comprehensive Planning

Jennifer Hochschild provides a thorough and insightful discussion on the liability of incremental policies in school desegregation (Hochschild 1984). She states that incrementalism's proponents tout it's ability to proceed through a sequence of approximations as if this is the most appropriate way to introduce social change. By way of sequential change, incremental efforts can have a constant reaction to action (Hochschild 1984:51-2). This, the incrementalists believe, is a virtue. With reference to school desegregation, Hochschild declares that this virtue is a fault (Hochschild 1984:52). The trick, according to Hochschild, is to "ensure that...improvements are brought into play simultaneously" (Hochschild 1984:53).

Robin Williams and Margaret Ryan, in their book *Schools in Transition* published in 1954 (the year of the *Brown* decision), provided strategic evidence against incrementalism. They found that in some communities "time...gives opportunity for opposition to crystallize and for community cleavages to develop" (Williams and Ryan 1954:239). In general, they found that "a clear-cut policy, administrated with understanding but also with resolution, seems to have been most effective in accomplishing desegregation with a minimum of difficulty." (Williams and Ryan 1954:242). Actually, "long-drawn out efforts and fluctuating policies appear to have maximized confusion and resistance" (Williams and Ryan 1954:242).

The findings of Williams and Ryan rule out the piecemeal approach so often advocated by incrementalists. Williams and Ryan discovered that "partial desegregation that affects only ...a few schools in a community opens the door to charges that 'we are being asked to do this, but the others aren't'" (Williams and Ryan 1954:243). The consequences are usually negative when a partial and incremental approach to school desegregation is used rather than a comprehensive approach such as Controlled Choice.

Controlled Choice does precisely what Hochschild has suggested: It guarantees desegregation, provides for choice of school of attendance by individuals, and promotes school improvement simultaneously. Simultaneity is one of the lynch-pins of this method because it permits individual choice as long as choice does not violate racial fairness guidelines which are group-derived. Controlled Choice uses the choice data as a referendum on the attractiveness of schools. Moreover, school authorities are obligated by Controlled Choice to use their limited resources to upgrade and make more attractive least chosen schools. This way, a school system may enhance itself by pushing up or magnetizing its bottom schools annually. To use a metaphor, "a rising tide raises all ships." This method of school improvement helps the whole system. Controlled Choice rules out arbitrary and capricious action such as offering additional resources to

principals who have "pull" with central administrators or to schools in neighborhoods where parents have "clout." Because the results of a Controlled Choice process reveal schools that are least attractive and in need of assistance, none can declare that the evaluation is influenced by prejudicial attitudes of administrators, that someone is picking on a particular school because of its location or because of its leadership.

Improving Least-Chosen Schools

The school improvement component of Controlled Choice is a puzzlement to many who like its other components. They are so wedded to the economic ideology of survival of the fittest that they fail to understand the focus of Controlled Choice on pushing up the bottom by improving least attractive schools. This puzzlement is a direct outcome of projecting principles and practices appropriate for one institutional system like economics upon another like education. In a capitalistic economy, value is enhanced by scarcity; thus, less is better than more, according to the wisdom of the market. But in democratic education, value is enhanced by abundance and plurality; the more the better. Consequently, state governments in the United States require compulsory education for all young people.

Thomas Jefferson, one of the founders of this country, promoted free public education as a way of preventing tyranny. He believed that public education would equip the people with virtue and wisdom and, also, would prepare them for public trust leadership roles. Thus, education was a way of enabling people to manage their common concerns in a democratic way (Jefferson 1813:116). Although Jefferson did not call for universal education at secondary and college levels, he nevertheless ran into opposition from the dominant people of power during his time for his notion of free elementary school education. Jefferson was sent away to France as Ambassador and missed the Constitutional Convention. While we cannot claim a cause-and-effect relationship between Jefferson's absence and the final version of the Constitution of the United States, we note that the Federal government is not given any responsibility for education. When this country was founded, education was identified as a privilege and not a right. Consequently, only a privileged-few were educated. In Jefferson's Virginia, for example, most poor whites as well as black and brown people were uneducated.

With this national heritage as a context, it is difficult to get citizens toward the close of the twentieth century and the beginning of the next century to understand the school improvement component of Controlled Choice that focuses on least chosen schools. It seemed to the public that our plan was designed to reward failure.

We finally broke through public misunderstanding in Boston of why Con-

trolled Choice focuses on less effective schools by way of an analogy. When one of the plans' designers was invited in 1989 to discuss the Controlled Choice plan on a radio station that broadcasted the Boston Celtics professional basketball games, he stated that Controlled Choice was like professional athletics and the National Basketball Association. The lowest ranked team during one season gets first chance at the best talent in the new pool of players for the next season. By following this procedure, all teams remain relatively balanced in the professional athletic skills of their players. And a league or association of teams all more or less balanced in talent offers genuine competition in the games that they play.

With reference to education, when schools at the bottom are pushed up and enhanced each year, the whole system (like the professional athletic league or association) is helped. When all schools are adequate and more than adequate, students have a broader range of acceptable schools from which to choose. As a result of this broader range of choice, 90 percent of the students in Boston who are assigned by its Controlled Choice plan get a first-choice or second-choice school. Less than 10 percent of Boston's students are mandatorily assigned to a school that they did not choose.

Controlled Choice and Magnet Schools

Controlled Choice embraces the concept of magnet schools. However, instead of magnetizing the best schools in the community, Controlled Choice magnetizes the worst schools in the community. Instead of using limited community resources to make good schools better and better schools best, Controlled Choice recommends that limited community resources should be used to make bad schools good and better. If the worse schools in the community are continuously improved, eventually a school system will not have any bad schools.

While Controlled Choice requires that immediate attention should be given to least chosen schools, it, as a student assignment method, embraces magnet schools that are designed to enrich the whole public school system. Such schools may be added to broaden curriculum offerings in the system as well as to upgrade particular schools. When magnet schools are included in a Controlled Choice plan, they should be available for citywide enrollment or they should be duplicated in each zone to fulfill the fairness requirement.

Our Controlled Choice plan was not implemented in Milwaukee during the late 1980s because some parents wanted to treat magnet schools as sanctuaries of privilege and opposed the proposal to replicate them by zones. The opponents in Milwaukee, of course, violated the fairness principle which prevents all students from experiencing educational disadvantaged circumstances because of their residence and which requires equity in the range and kinds of educational

services available in each zone.

The above discussion indicates that the school improvement component of Controlled Choice is a complex of actions based on theoretical premises that differ from those of social Darwinism and other nineteenth century ideas and ideologies that are inappropriate foundations for the organization of education during the twenty-first century. The theoretical foundation on which Controlled Choice is based urges us to pay attention to the meek and the weak and to schools that are least attractive. These practices are based on a theoretical observation made by a famous sociologist years ago. Robert Merton wrote approximately a half century ago that "it is not infrequently the case that the nonconforming minority in a society represents the interests and ultimate values of the group more effectively than the conforming majority" (Merton 1949:367). Controlled Choice caters to the nonconforming minority as well as the conforming majority. By so doing, Controlled Choice is fair to all.

When student assignments are made according to the racial fairness guidelines of Controlled Choice no one can claim that a least-chosen or most-chosen school is due to the racial composition of the student body, since all schools more or less have similar student bodies. Also, no one can claim schools that receive resources to assist in their improvement receive such resources because of the kinds of students enrolled, when all students are granted proportional access to all schools.

The Controlled Choice approach not only identifies schools in need of assistance, it recognizes schools that are most attractive to all groups. Since seats are reserved for all racial and ethnic groups and/or all socioeconomic groups according to their proportions in the systemwide school-going student body, the schools which are chosen as first-choice or second-choice in numbers that exceed the seats reserved for each group are labeled "overchosen" schools. The annual choices are a referendum that indicates which schools are doing something right, since students in all racial, ethnic or socioeconomic groups prefer these schools. Schools so selected by students apparently indicate the educational programs that are attractive in a local community. These programs probably should be replicated. This, therefore, is another benefit of Controlled Choice. It can identify both more and less attractive schools in a system; these schools, then, can be used as negative and positive models to be avoided or emulated.

Controlled Choice overcomes the problem inherent in phasing in educational programs sequentially and incrementally. Initially, school systems tried desegregation alone. While minority and majority students were integrated, the quality of education did not always improve. So planners decided to give less attention to ways of desegregating all schools and, sequentially, turned toward a new experiment—magnet schools. Magnet schools did improve education. But they were expensive and few in number. Magnet schools never accommodated

more than 30 percent of the students in a school system and frequently accommodate a smaller proportion. While they were beneficial for the few who could enroll in them, magnet schools were unfair to most students in the system who could not attend them. Thus, in a trial and error way, educational planners finally fixated on choice. While interdistrict choice benefited schools in the suburbs, it did not help the schools or the school system left behind. In interdistrict choice arrangements, actually a new phenomenon the reverse of the Robin Hood story was created. Since state pupil financial allowances were transferred to suburban school districts that some central city students chose, the city district which usually was poorer than suburban districts was left with even fewer resources. These interdistrict choice plans actually took from the poor and gave to the rich.

What we see in this brief summary is the negative outcome of remedies that were applied singly or sequentially. We used these same remedies in Controlled Choice but introduced them simultaneously so that one activity influenced each of the other activities. By using the simultaneous approach, school desegregation influences school choice; school choice influences school improvement; and school improvement influences school desegregation.

Thus, Controlled Choice rejects the notion of assigning students to schools that have distinct curricular identities based on student achievement scores or aptitude indicators. Schools that have been magnetized should be equally available to poor and affluent children and to racial and ethnic majority and minority children. The child's interest in participating in a school whose curriculum has been magnetized should be the basic criterion for admission, in addition to racial and socioeconomic fairness guidelines that guarantee group equity in admission. Moreover, Controlled Choice requires schools with specific educational missions like two-way bilingual education or inclusive education (the integration of regular and special-needs students) or advanced learning to be racially and socioeconomically integrated.

By making all kinds of schools available to all kinds of students in all kinds of neighborhoods and by mandating the availability of resources for the enhancement of least chosen schools, Controlled Choice eliminates race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, residential location, and a host of other restraints upon the availability of educational opportunities. Controlled Choice truly makes educational services and opportunities available to all students in a way that is fair.

Controlled Choice and Transportation

In urban and suburban school districts where transportation is a requirement for many students, Controlled Choice equalizes the burden of using transportation or the opportunity of walking to and from school by eliminating neighborhood student assignment zones. Moreover, students who use transportation to go to and from school in a Controlled Choice plan do so because they choose to do so. Mandatory assignments are minimal under Controlled Choice; hence, no population group is required to use more or less transportation than another to go to and from school. This is another way in which Controlled Choice is fair.

Beyond being fair, we discovered that it made sense conceptually to eliminate neighborhoods as the basis for assigning students to school. According to Herbert Richardson, there must be asymmetry between the form in which evil manifests itself and the form of our opposition to it (Richardson 1968:202). Martin Luther King, Jr. stated the proposition this way: "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that" (King 1964:45). Light, of course, is asymmetrical to darkness. Using a neighborhood-based plan to overcome *defacto* or *dejure* segregation is not very helpful, since most neighborhoods in the United States are segregated. This approach is not asymmetrical to the evil of segregated housing it seeks to correct. Controlled Choice, however, is asymmetrical to student assignments by neighborhoods.

Limitations of Neighborhood-based Desegregation Plans

We review briefly some of the more conventional ways of achieving school desegregation in the past that rely on neighborhood student attendance zones. Among the approaches most frequently recommended in the literature are expanding or contracting a neighborhood student attendance zone, pairing two contiguous neighborhoods, clustering several neighborhoods and closing neighborhood school building for the purpose of redistributing a homogeneous population among other schools to achieve increased desegregation.

After the *Brown* decision, school boards manipulated the racial composition of public schools by *moving the boundary line of a school zone one, two or three blocks.* If the resident population in a block differed from the prevailing population in a student body, the racially different block might be taken from one school attendance zone and added to another. The same arbitrary procedure was followed in changing the student attendance zone of a segregated school. Blocks of students whose population was similar to the other students in a segregated school were cut off. It is difficult to achieve racial desegregation by moving the boundary lines of zones one or two blocks because city neighborhoods are

usually too small to encompass a mixed racial population. Moreover, the racial composition of neighborhood blocks changes from time to time. The block by block method of changing the racial composition of a student attendance zone is not likely to yield permanent results and tends to create feelings of anger that the block in which one lives is being assigned to or withdrawn from a school attendance zone in an arbitrary way.

Another neighborhood-based approach is the *pairing* of two contiguous neighborhoods that have racially identifiable populations that are different from each other. Under such an arrangement, the schools in the two attendance zones are linked so that one school houses elementary school grades one, two and three and the other school, grades four, five and six. All students in the two zones attend the first school together for the lower-division elementary grades and the second school for the upper-division elementary grades. Thus, "by combining two contiguous attendance zones and changing the grade configuration of two schools, both school are desegregated and reflect the combined racial composition of the two zones" (Hughes, Gordon, and Hillman. 1980:56). While the pairing approach achieves some desegregation, it does this by violating an important principle of education, the principle of continuity in elementary education in the same building for young people.

Still another neighborhood-based arrangement is to pair student bodies in attendance zones that are distant from each other and do not share a common boundary. Again, this approach achieves some desegregation; but the interruption of a continuous experience in the same learning environment is a limitation of this approach too.

Finally, *clustering* of several neighborhoods has been used to desegregate racially identifiable schools. The clustering arrangement permits students to remain in segregated neighborhood schools until they reach, for example, the top grades of elementary school. Then, they must attend a desegregated middle or junior high school in the cluster. Obviously, this is part-time desegregation only and does not fully redress the grievances of minority plaintiffs about segregated education. Some clustering arrangements may involve three schools at the same level. This approach is similar to the pairing arrangement between two schools, mentioned earlier; all students may have a desegregated education in one school of the cluster in grades one and two, and in another school of the cluster for grades three and four and in a third school of the cluster for grades five and six (Hughes et al 1990s, 59-61). The limitation of this approach is the same as that discussed in pairing, and contributes to even greater disruption in educational continuity.

More radical than clustering or pairing to achieve desegregation is the *closing of a school building,* especially in a segregated neighborhood, and dispersing

its homogeneous student body into other schools where the racial characteristics of the new students contribute to desegregation. School closings have been used most frequently in inner-city, black neighborhoods. The selective use of this method is not fair. Under this arrangement, neighborhood schools for black and brown populations have been eliminated while those for whites have been retained.

Populations shifts in racially segregated neighborhood housing patterns have defeated many neighborhood-based school desegregation plans, even those that appeared to be successful when first implemented. Unless neighborhood-based student attendance zones are readjusted in response to changing population patterns, Robert Dentler and Marvin Scott declare that a school desegregation plan of geocodes or residential neighborhoods eventually will be defeated.

All of this suggests that neighborhood-based school desegregation plans represent only a short-term victory and do not eliminate segregated education root and branch. Even when they work, they achieve the goal of mixing children of different racial groups but do not necessarily guarantee an enhanced education.

Other approaches to school desegregation that differ from the neighborhood-based approach are freedom-of-choice plans and majority-to-minority transfers. However, these plans have not been effective in achieving school desegregation. Indeed, when these are the only plans in use, they tend to result in increased segregation since they provide no education-improvement incentive for students to make cross-racial school choices.

Voluntary plans (which is the name sometimes given to freedom-of-choice plans) intend to achieve desegregation but ultimately are effective, if they enhance only the quality of education that students receive. The quality-enhancement factor is one of the key ingredients in a good school desegregation plan; usually it is not considered in such plans as freedom-of-choice and majority-to-minority transfer arrangements. This is another reason why we prefer Controlled Choice: it achieves multiple goals simultaneously.

Unlike neighborhood-based student assignment methods, the efficacy of Controlled Choice is not dependent upon the immutability of neighborhood housing patterns and the stability of neighborhood populations. Nor does the policy limit choice to a relatively few magnet or specialized schools and programs. In Controlled Choice, the access of minority individuals to an instructionally effective and enhanced education is not contingent on retaining racially segregated public schooling. Controlled Choice requires all schools to educate children in all population groups and to maintain schools that are attractive to all.

The fairness phenomenon which permeates all aspects of Controlled Choice is essential in constructing relatively large, heterogeneous student attendance zones. Most school districts can be divided into not more than two, three,

or maybe four large student attendance zones. Zones are best constructed by aggregating contiguous neighborhoods of different population groups. It is important that each zone include adjacent rather than discontinuous neighbors. This method of designing student attendance zones guards against the appearance of "gerrymandering". If citizens suspect gerrymandering, public confidence in the planning process could be undermined.

Zones should be large enough to encompass heterogeneous population groups but small enough to limit student transportation time to and from school within the zone to not more than thirty, thirty-five, or forty minutes.

Zones should encompass an equivalent range of educational programs and services. The achievement of equivalency is one of the first responsibilities of zonewide school authorities and zone advisory groups. The racial composition of the students residing in each zone should reflect the districtwide student body, although modest variations from it are permitted as long as the minority population that may consist of a combination of groups is not less than one-fifth of the zonewide public school student body. To be effective in negotiating with the population at large in a zone, subdominant people of power should have a minimum critical mass. At or above the critical mass level of one-fifth, minorities have a better chance of negotiating a fair solution to the various issues that may arise.

Summary of Controlled Choice Benefits

A comprehensive desegregation plan, Controlled Choice governs all student assignment decisions, including: new admissions, intra- and interdistrict transfers, the mainstreaming of bilingual and special needs students into regular or standard education classes, and the reassignments of students resulting from school closings, school consolidations, and new school construction. The policy also serves as an innovative planning tool that can readily expedite the creation of more effective magnet or specialized schools while also stimulating the development of improved instructional practices and enhanced educational opportunities in existing schools. Moreover, Controlled Choice allows local school officials to implement a truly "living" plan that will accommodate changes in legal, political, and educational requirements and in the demographic characteristics of a district.

If Controlled Choice is implemented correctly, it provides local officials with a final student assignment policy that maximizes family and student choice and effective desegregation outcomes on a districtwide basis, provides stability in student assignments and continuity in educational experiences, frees the public schools from their hostage status to real estate and other regressive neighborhood interests, and makes all schools and programs available to students of di-

verse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds in an equitable way. And since Controlled Choice is grounded in parent empowerment and uses the reputational method of evaluating schools, the policy gives local school officials a clear mandate to ensure that all desegregating schools provide distinctive or enhanced educational opportunities.

To recapitulate, Controlled Choice eliminates individual school attendance boundaries in favor of large heterogeneous zones or a citywide attendance area, adopts a definition of desegregation that guarantees minority and majority group students with genuine proportional access to all schools and programs, allows students to choose schools they prefer to attend and to rank-order their preferences without guarantee that any student will receive his or her first choice (although most students will), and ensures complete honesty and integrity in the disposition of all assignment decisions.

Parent Information Centers

To "level the playing field" so that parents in varying racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups have equal access to the choice process and are able to make informed decisions in a timely fashion, Parent Information Centers are needed. These Centers, staffed by parents, are an outreach service provided by the school system for the community at large. The Parent Information Center should serve as an advocate for all parents. The Harvard Seminar on Choice has documented the absence of universal information among racial and ethnic groups about extraordinary educational offerings. In Montgomery County, Maryland where nineteen magnet schools were established by 1987, "72% of white parents [had] heard the term whereas just 39% of Hispanic parents [could] recall hearing the term "magnet school" (Fuller 1995:5). Parent Information Centers in our Controlled Choice plan help overcome this problem.

Difference Between Controlled Choice and Other Choice Plans

Finally, we discuss how Controlled Choice differs from other choice plans. Choice has been advocated as one approach to educational reform. It is something of value. But choice is of limited value if used alone, as a single, simplistic approach. Human society and its institutions must be understood as complexes of characteristics that defy simplistic solutions.

Choice, we suspect, has captured the attention of educational planners and reformers because it is compatible with the increasing belief in individualism that Robert Bellah has observed in American society. He tells us that "self-reliance is an old American value" (Bellah, 1985:48), that meeting the utilitarian and expressive needs of individuals are important societal goals (Bellah 1985:50),

and that we often attempt to fulfill utilitarian individualism in the public institutions of our society (Bellah 1985:46) such as education and religion. This function of institutions has led some to believe that "the individual is the only firm reality". Bellah tells us that "separation and individualism have reached a kind of culmination," but then he states," their triumph is far from complete" (Bellah 1985:276).

Individuation has been unable to triumph completely because it is a human characteristic of social organizations that is of limited value without the human characteristic of participation or commitment (Bellah 1985:277). In the human community, fulfillment of the individual and commitment to participate in groups and institutions are complementary. One action without the other is insufficient. If education performs a complex function of enhancing individuals at the same time that it advances the community, then we understand how any monistic approach to educational reform such as choice is too limited and, therefore, inappropriate.

This is the conceptual orientation with which we should approach the issue of choice. However, this orientation is often ignored in educational reform programs. Choice as an educational reform method has been severely tainted with the idea of privilege and even exclusiveness. The problem with advocating *choice* as "the key" to educational reform as claimed by some of its proponents is their failure to embrace the principle of complementarity that recognizes the need for an opposing concept like *control* which also contributes to educational reform. Opposites inform and correct each other when held together in creative tension. When choice and control coexist in an educational system, such a system has a better chance of fulfilling the needs of all. An educational system that experiences the creativity of freedom and the discipline of conformity is better positioned to meet the two-fold goal of education: individual enhancement and community advancement. Both aspects of this goal are important. Thus, the celebration of choice, and choice alone, as the operative concept which will usher in educational reform is wrong.

It is hard for any idea about the limitations of choice to get a fair hearing because of the important role that choice supporters play in the molding of public opinion. State Governor Rudy Perpich said, unequivocally, "choice is the key to improvement in education" (Perpich 1989:1). John Chubb of the Brookings Institute in Washington, D.C. asked himself this question: "What accounts for effective organizations?" His answer: "Autonomy!" He believes that autonomy is more important than anything else. If we want schools to be organized more effectively and to teach more successfully, Chubb states that we must give them autonomy. In his opinion, "the surest way to get autonomy and accountability into the public school system is not through regulation...but through a mechanism of choice," such as "vouchers, open enrollment, magnet

schools" and other approaches (Chubb 1989:5-10).

The *New York Times* reported that a forum held in June, 1990 at the Brookings Institute in connection with the publication of Chubb's book, co-authored with Terry Moe of Stanford University and entitled *Politics, Markets and American Schools,* "seemed to verge on becoming a celebration of the choice concept instead of an examination of...the study" (Wycliff, 1990).

The study included an analysis of detailed data on 500 schools and the students who attend these schools as well as their teachers and principals. The study obtained information on the performance of students on mathematics, science, reading, writing, and vocabulary tests and combined the results obtained during students' sophomore year and again at graduation into a comprehensive measure of student achievement (Chubb 1989:6).

Chubb and his colleague committed the error of oversimplification in their discussion of causes of effective schooling. They attributed effective schooling more or less to a single characteristic--autonomy. Another error of oversimplification is to attribute the source of autonomy and accountability in school more or less to another single mechanism--choice. Actually, autonomy and participation are complementary functions and so are choice and control. Autonomy or choice alone is insufficient to solve the problems of schooling unless linked with its opposite.

Another problem with choice plans other than Controlled Choice is their tendency to be modeled in the image of the economic system. For example, Chubb and Moe speak of the beneficial effects of schools controlled by markets and schools competing for students in the open market. Analogies are helpful up to a point, but they have grave explanatory limitations.

The rules that govern the economic system concerned with producing and distributing goods and services are different from those that govern the education system concerned with developing and disseminating knowledge and information. In the economic system, there may be unworthy buyers who are unwilling to pay the asking price. But in education, there are no unworthy seekers of knowledge. In business dealings, when a product is given away, it depresses the market. But in educational transactions, knowledge increases as it is shared and given to others. Thus, a market orientation is inappropriate for operating an educational system.

For these reasons, we advocate Controlled Choice which enhances education through student choice, student body desegregation, and school improvement. Controlled Choice is more than permitting students "who have not succeeded in one public school to enroll in another district's school," an approach permitted in Minnesota (Perpich, 1989:2). School reform should promote human diversity, require that all schools be brought up to an adequate and acceptable level, distribute common educational resources equitably to all population

groups in accordance with their unique needs, and provide opportunities for students to indicate schools of preference. These and other functions of schooling as an institution are responsibilities too great to be fulfilled by autonomy or choice that operates according to market forces.

The leaders of the Harvard Seminar on Choice evaluated selected programs of choice in a few communities and concluded that "school choice will do little to diversify enrollment" if public school authorities fail to capitalize on appealing features such as smaller enrollments, enthusiastic and experienced teachers, and distinct curricular identities. (Fuller 1995:6). Unfortunately, the Seminar did not examine, in-depth, Controlled Choice which differs from other choice plans. Boston which has operated under a Revised Controlled Choice Student Assignment Plan since 1992 has desegregated and diversified all elementary and middle schools in an equitable way, largely because Controlled Choice required it to implement choice, school improvement and, student body diversity *simultaneously.* Urging schools to develop distinctive curricular is something of value. However, we have no evidence that size of enrollment, as mentioned in the report of the Harvard Seminar, is an essential feature in the achievement of diversity or school improvement. We do know that choice, desegregation, and school improvement must be implemented at the same time and not singly as San Antonio, Milwaukee, and Montgomery County attempted to do. (These were the school districts primarily featured in the policy brief issued by leaders of the Harvard Seminar.)

Conclusions

Actually, we concur with the conclusion of the Harvard Seminar's policy brief that choice alone will not diversify schools. Also, we concur with the conclusion of Larry Hughes, William Gordon, and Larry Hillman that magnet programs have had only "minimal impact on the overall racial balances of [school systems in Dallas, Houston, Indianapolis, Minneapolis and Philadelphia]" and that "there are no instances where a major school system has noticeably desegregated its public schools by using a voluntary magnet program (Hughes, Gordon and Hillman 1980:20). We also have seen in our Boston studies that desegregation alone will not improve education. All of this is to say that the principle of simultaneity must be continuously evoked, that choice, school improvement and student body diversity must go hand in hand. This is the complexity of the matter which should not be distorted by oversimplification.

We conclude that regulation as well as autonomy and choice as well as control are essential in school reform. These two, like love and justice or excellence and equity, ought to always be kept together, held in creative tension, and should not be permitted to separate.

Another conclusion that may be drawn from this discussion is that school reform plans including those that emphasize choice or Controlled Choice should be tailored to accommodate all sorts and conditions of students and should not be skewed to deal primarily with the needs of white students or middle-class students at the expense of others. To cater to one student group at the expense of other student groups is unfair.

In all that we do, we must be fair. Without fairness, our public policies and plans will be of limited lasting value. Controlled Choice aims to be fair and to provide a permanent experience of desegregation and school improvement.

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Chapter 2

Design and Implementation Strategies

School desegregation planning is both a political and an educational process that requires the sensitive use of skills in community organization. The planning process should be public so that no individual or group has reason to believe secrete deals have been made that are beneficial to some and harmful to other groups.

We reject the premise of some education planners that student assignment plans should be skewed in a direction that favors White or Brown or Black people and poor or working class or affluent people. To favor one group at the expense of another is unfair. Student assignment plans for public school systems must be fair to all. This is a fundamental requirement. To be fair, however, a plan must consider the situations and circumstances of the various population groups served by the public school system. If a particular group has been harmed because of unlawful discrimination in the past, the planners and the community are obligated to take appropriate action to restore the affected group to a position it would have occupied had it not experienced discrimination. Thus, to be fair to all population groups does not mean they or the schools they attend should be treated the same as all others. Even when special opportunities are provided for a segment of the community to redress harmful historical circumstances, these opportunities must be made available in a way that is fair to all. The achievement of fairness is a complex activity that must be carefully designed and implemented.

Student assignment plans that are based on the principle of interdependence have guidelines in this principle that facilitates the achievement of fairness. According to the principle of interdependence, any opportunities tailored for the specific needs of a particular group must, also, benefit the total community in a general way. And, any opportunities available for the general community should also benefit its component parts in specific ways. A comprehensive student assignment plan does not rule out special arrangements for specific populations. However, the burden of proof is upon the planners to demonstrate how these arrangements for part of the membership benefit the whole membership. Likewise, universal policies and practices are appropriate in a school system of pluralistic cultural groups. However, systemwide criteria cannot be justified if they are harmful to any of the constituent groups. Good planning for school assignments of students must mesh universal and particularistic policies and

practices continuously and monitor them for the sake of fairness.

Presented here is a discussion of the implementation strategies we have used in Controlled Choice Student Assignment plans to achieve excellence and equity goals in ways that are fair.

Student Attendance Zones

The first step in achieving equity in the student assignment process is to break the link between school of assignment and residential location for school patrons. Racial and ethnic groups tend to be concentrated disproportionately in selected geographic area of cities. When public school systems use residential neighborhoods as the basis for constructing student attendance zones, a racially imbalanced or segregated student body is a likely outcome in some schools. We, therefore, urge that neighborhood of residence as a factor in the determination of school assignments should be considered, if at all, in a secondary or tertiary way.

Since diversity is a valuable educational experience for all students, our plans usually link several neighborhoods of dissimilar population groups into a single zone. Such a zone is relatively heterogeneous and tends to reflect the characteristics of the school system's total student body.

Student attendance zones may include elementary schools, middle schools or junior high schools and high schools. Or, they may include only elementary and middle schools or junior high schools, as in Boston. A zone, also, may be limited to elementary schools only. A student attendance zone should encompass enough schools to provide students and their families with a reasonable amount of choice.

When Controlled Choice began in Cambridge in the early 1980s, the number of elementary schools was too small to distribute among several zones and, at the same time, grant meaningful choice; so the total city became the student attendance zone and parents and their children had nearly a dozen schools from which to choose. Each school had a diversified 1994 school-age population of African Americas (26 percent) Asian Americans (14 percent) Hispanics (5 percent) and Whites (55 percent) from which to recruit students. A citywide attendance zone provided each school with the possibility of recruiting a diversified student body.

Boston's Controlled Choice Plan, adopted in 1989, delineated the school system into three relatively large student attendance zones--an East Zone, a West Zone, and a North Zone. The racial diversity of the North Zone in Boston in 1989 was 25 percent White, 32 percent Black, 17 percent Asian American, and 26 percent Hispanic. In the West Zone, the racial diversity of the student population was 26 percent White, 52 percent Black, 2 percent Asian American and 20

percent Hispanic. The East Zone student population was similar to the West Zone with 24 percent White, 58 percent Black, 5 percent Asian America and 13 percent Hispanic.

In a city as large and complex as Boston, it simply is not practicable to make all elementary and middle schools citywide schools of choice. So we linked contiguous residential neighborhoods into relatively large and heterogeneous student attendance zones that included twenty to twenty-five elementary schools in each zone. While neighborhood residence is not the basis for school assignment in Controlled Choice, it is important to derive student attendance zones from neighborhoods that are contiguous so that no one can claim gerrymandering. The individuals in all racial and ethnic populations in these zones may choose any school in their zone and may not be rejected by a school if seats allotted for their racial group have not been filled.

A Controlled Choice Plan developed for Brockton, Massachusetts in 1995 consisted of two relatively large student attendance zones with an elementary school student body of 57 percent majority and 43 percent minority in the North Zone and 54 percent majority and 46 percent minority in the South Zone. There are seven elementary schools in each zone. In 1990, we developed a Controlled Choice Student Assignment Plan for Milwaukee consisting of two zones that was never implemented.

In most instances, one, two or three zones and under certain circumstances four or five zones will embrace a heterogeneous population that can desegregate all schools. Such zones also must provide a range of choice in school of enrollment.

Relatively large student attendance zones have other benefits. They set limits on the transportation that a school system provides for its students and also control the length of a bus ride to and from school, when school of enrollment is restricted to the attendance zone in which students live.

Zones can also play a role in school improvement. In Controlled Choice all zones should be equivalent in the quality and range of educational services offered. This requirement, if fulfilled, prevents students from being disadvantaged educationally because of their neighborhood of residence. Since all schools belong to and are available for all students in a zone, and because all zones consist of school-going populations that are racially and socioeconomically heterogeneous, the education provided for students is equal if the zones are equivalent. Zone equivalency, however, cannot be guaranteed through demographic and ecological methods only.

Zone School Improvement Councils

While the central administration has major responsibility for the overall

management and implementation of a controlled choice assignment plan, basic responsibility for ensuring educational quality and encouraging innovation among and within schools should be vested at the zone and school level. In Brockton, we accomplished this by establishing a Zone Coordinating Council in each zone; in Boston we called the group a Zone School Improvement Council. Such councils should have a diverse membership consisting of parents from each school, principals, teachers and community/business/voluntary association leaders. Parent representation on the Council should reflect the racial, ethnic, linguistic and socioeconomic characteristics of the school zone's total student population.

Depending on the span of responsibility, zones may have Directors or Assistant/Associate Superintendents. Decentralization of a system's administrative leadership to the Zone level is a good way to provide better coordination of the educational enterprise in each school building. An administrator at the Zone level, of course, works with the Council which is his or her advisory group and serves as a member of the Superintendent's Cabinet. Individuals in this role give leadership to the assessment process that determines whether educational offerings in a zone are equivalent to those in other zones. A zone administrator also may provide technical assistance or referrals to assistance for schools that have experienced difficulty attracting a diversified student body. Since all schools should aspire to be unique and magnetic, staff members at the zone level help least attractive schools magnetize themselves. This administrative function at the zone level deals with daily operational issues in the delivery of educational services and should free central administrators to devote more time to long range planning for the total school system.

Since Controlled Choice places a responsibility upon each school to make itself attractive to students, educational planning is further decentralized to the building level. Thus, Controlled Choice encourages school-based management and cooperation between principals, teachers, parents, and community leaders to upgrade less attractive schools.

Parent Information Centers

In relatively large school systems, each zone should have a Parent Information Center. In smaller school systems, the Parent Information Center may serve multiple zones or the total school system. These Centers are responsible for the day-to-day operations of the student assignment process. The Director of the Parent Information Center and his or her staff are responsible for administering school-selection and student-registration. These Centers are repositories of information about programs in and profiles of school. They help arrange school visits by parents, provide assistance to families for whom English is not

their first language, interpret the racial fairness guidelines, provide information regarding bus routes, and explain services provided for special-needs students. These are outreach centers for parents and not marketing operations for schools and their programs.

Magnet Schools

Controlled Choice student assignment plans embrace new and traditional concepts of magnet schools. In Boston, the Hernandez, a two-way bilingual school, and the Timilty Middle Schools are citywide magnet schools. Students are assigned to these magnet schools at the same time others are assigned to regular schools in the three zones. Traditional and magnet schools like other schools, are required to attract diversified student bodies. So magnet schools are not treated as a special subset of schools in a controlled choice plan.

A unique feature of Controlled Choice is that it encourages all schools to become magnets. The least attractive schools are scrutinized each year by zone authorities, advisors, and by the system's central administrative staff to determine ways of magnetizing them so that they will attract a diversified student body. While Controlled Choice accommodates citywide magnet schools, most magnet schools that are developed after a Controlled Choice plan has been adopted are zonewide rather than citywide magnet schools. Because they are zone magnets, Controlled Choice is better able than other student assignment plans to control transportation costs for magnet schools. It can control these costs because zone magnets are available only to students who live in a zone. Zone magnets, of course, can be replicated if another zone believes a similar kind of magnet school will enhance its educational offerings. Thus, Controlled Choice student assignment plans embrace magnet schools and place the responsibility for proposing new themes for magnet schools at zone and building levels.

School and Program Development

Controlled Choice identifies the school building as the basic educational unit of a system. It promotes the idea of every school in its own building or self-contained physical space with its own leader.

The Controlled Choice plan also encourages each school to function as a learning community. In this respect, Controlled Choice encourages a magnetic mission for the total school rather than the location of a series of magnet programs within a school. Sometimes participants in special programs within schools have only limited interaction with other students in the same building. Such limited and fragmented interaction is inconsistent with the concept of a

genuine learning community. This is why Controlled Choice encourages magnetization of the entire school.

Determining Instructional Capacity

The concept of instructional capacity refers to the number of seats required to accommodate all students in the school system. This capacity should be estimated before each school year and the school sign up process. The seats available in each school should be fixed each school year as a proportion of the total instructional capacity. Thus, the number of students that each school is expected to instruct is known at the beginning of the school year. This helps a school system avoid the temptation of crowding students into an attractive school until it overflows while less attractive schools are underutilized. Moreover, we know that it is difficult to maintain demographic balance in the characteristics of students if some facilities are underutilized. There is a temptation to place less popular programs in the space that is readily available in under-utilized schools. When this is done, the pressure for such schools to attract students because they are innovative is relieved. Certainly, the pressure to replicate effective schools is removed when less attractive schools are used as dumping grounds for students and programs that other schools do not want.

Giving each school building a fixed number of seats as a proportion of the total instructional capacity can also avoid the unfair practice of arbitrarily capping some but not all schools. The fixed number of seats that is a proportion of the system's instructional capacity is a cap on enrollment for all schools and is a more effective way of using existing facilities. To summarize, by identifying an instructional capacity figure each year for the total school system and distributing it equitably among all school buildings, pressure is placed on all school communities to make themselves sufficiently attractive to educate their fair share of all students. The less attractive schools are stimulated to emulate the more attractive schools, since the more attractive schools will not be permitted to overexpand and take up the slack of the less attractive schools.

Racial Fairness Guidelines

For each zone, racial fairness guidelines are derived. These should be determined for the entering grade at each school level–the first grade for elementary school, the sixth grade for middle school and the ninth grade for high school. If the entering grade in each school is desegregated, the whole school, within a few years, will become desegregated. Racial fairness guidelines for a zone are used in determining the racial composition of students accepted in the entering classes of zone schools.

Two techniques are suggested for deriving racial fairness guidelines: (1) For elementary schools, the proportion of students in kindergarten and in the first grade by racial groups within a zone are averaged. For middle schools, fifth and sixth grades are averaged. For high schools, averages for eighth and ninth grades are used. This technique bases the racial fairness guidelines on the past year's experience. (2) The second technique for deriving racial fairness guidelines is based on data of past action and future possibility. In the second technique, two grades (kindergarten and first, fifth and sixth, and eighth and ninth) are also used. However, proportions for each racial group are derived from the actual number of students enrolled in the rising grade (kindergarten, fifth or eighth grades) and from the number of students by racial groups who participated in the application process for the next school year's first, sixth and ninth grades. The average of these two proportions by race is the racial fairness guideline. The second technique differs from the first because one set of proportions is derived from students who *plan* to enroll in the entering grade of a public school but who, actually, may not. We know that all students who fill out an application for public school may not follow through. However, the benefit of the second technique is that it allows planners to take into consideration an increased or decreased number of student in a particular racial group who plan to go to public school in the present year which may differ from the number who attend public school the year before. Either of the techniques mentioned will yield a valid and useful set of racial fairness guidelines.

If student were assigned to public schools in a random way, each school would have the same proportion of students by race or ethnic group in its student body that exists in the zone or systemwide public school-going student body. Thus, the racial fairness guidelines are fair or equitable ways of making all educational opportunities available to all students in a system.

Rather than assign students to schools in a random way, Controlled Choice permits students to chose a school and to rank-order their preferences. Since rank-ordered preferences differ among most public school-going students, 80 to 85 percent usually receive a first-choice school assignment and 85 to 90 percent usually receive a first-choice or second-choice school assignment. Thus, an exceedingly large number of students are satisfied with their school of assignment under controlled choice. Students who receive their second-choice school seldom petition to change to their first-choice school after attending a second-choice school for a year. They seldom apply for a transfer because students in second-choice schools discover that such schools have more to offer than they anticipated.

Thus, the racial fairness guidelines fully desegregate all schools in all communities in which controlled choice has been faithfully implemented and, at the same time, bring satisfaction to most students who received a desegregated

school of choice.

A fundamental goal of Controlled Choice is to make all educational opportunities available to all students in an equitable way. If one racial group wishes to enroll in a particular school in greater numbers than other racial groups, the equity properties of Controlled choice permit the racial group that prefers a school in numbers that exceed its fair share proportion to occupy up to 5 or 10 percentage points more seats than were designated. This flexible feature of the plan makes it easier to administer while maintaining a commitment to desegregation and racial pluralism.

Racial fairness guidelines guarantee diversity and, therefore, support pluralism which is a beneficial condition of education. These guidelines also benefit each racial and ethnic group in that students know that always there will be people present who are similar to them in more than token numbers. Thus, racial fairness guidelines prevent racial isolation for any racial or ethnic group.

Minimizing Disruption among Current Students

Desegregation is one goal that Controlled Choice achieves. However, there are other educational goals such as stability and continuity that should be honored too. Controlled Choice does this by permitting a student currently enrolled in a school to remain in it until he or she finishes the top grade of that school. Our experience has been that this practice substantially reduces the anxiety that a new student assignment could generate. Students currently enrolled in a school should be permitted to continue in that school until they graduate even though the system has adopted a new student assignment plan. If this contributes to racial imbalance, such an imbalance should be accepted as a temporary aberration that in due time will pass away with each succeeding entering class that is racially balanced, according to the racial fairness guidelines.

Beyond promoting stability for students currently enrolled in a school during the change-over period from an old to a new student assignment plan, Controlled Choice also promotes continuity. Any student who wins an assignment to a particular school may remain in that school until the course of study offered has been completed. Meanwhile, if a student discovers that the school chosen and to which one has been assigned is not an appropriate match with one's educational interests, Controlled Choice lets one chose another school the following year and each succeeding year, if one wishes, until one is satisfied. Although only a very few students exercise this option, it is one that is available in the plan. This option means that no one is ever frozen into an impossible and unacceptable school situation. Controlled Choice is a user-friendly student assignment plan that is flexible and accommodates change but also promotes stability and continuity.

Sibling Fairness Guidelines

A student who has a brother or sister already enrolled in a school that also is the school of first choice for the newly enrolling sibling will be assigned to that school. The reason for granting sibling enrollment preference is to reduce the stress and strain on parents created by having to relate to several different schools. Sibling preference is a fairness privilege that is available only if parents choose to enroll their children in the same school and submit a complete school application form in a timely way. Sibling preference is implemented by assigning children who request it first and cannot be guaranteed for late registrants.

Students who have received their assignment will not be removed from a school to accommodate the sibling preference policy for another family. Sibling preference for enrollment in a particular school is not a legacy that can be passed on to other children in a family by a brother or sister not now enrolled. It is reserved for currently enrolled and currently enrolling siblings only and is achieved by assigning children in the same family to the same school before seats are offered to other children.

Walk-Zone Priority Policy

Controlled Choice permits students to chose schools near to or distant from their home. Students who chose schools to which they can walk are assigned to such schools before other students are assigned. This priority of assignment is granted for these students not for the purpose of promoting neighborhood schools but because it is cost-effective to assign students to schools that do not require transportation. Controlled Choice does not require students to enroll in schools nearest to their homes; thus, the walk-zone policy establishes a privilege that may or may not be exercised by students who live near a school.

The walk-zone is determined by state or local law which prescribes the circumstances under which transportation may and may not be provided for students. The walk-zone priority is offered to students whose applications are filed in a timely way and cannot be guaranteed for late registrants.

Assignments based on the walk-zone priority policy are made according to racial fairness guidelines. If the number of students in a walk-zone racial group who wish to attend the nearby school exceeds the number of seats allocated for that group, assignments will be made to the school by lottery.

Bilingual Student Assignments

Students whose primary language is not English and who have been identified as eligible for bilingual education services will be assigned to a school that

provides these services. When feasible, bilingual education students should be given a choice of schools that provide Transitional Bilingual Education classes or two-way bilingual education programs for their primary language group. School systems with several bilingual programs should place them in a variety of schools that are located in different kinds of neighborhoods. If programs are distributed in schools throughout the system, bilingual students eventually can be placed in a mainstream class without having to change schools.

Special Education Student Assignments

In accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act the educational placement of a special education student is determined by each student's individual education planning team and cannot be unilaterally determined by the parents. Therefore, students who have been identified as requiring special education services will be assigned only to those schools containing the special education program required by their IEP (Individual Educational Plan). These students may also apply to attend magnet schools offering an inclusive special education/regular education program, if the program meets the requirements of their IEP.

School Selection and Assignment Process

The student assignment process for the next school year should begin in January. By the end of January, applications for all students who need a new school assignment should be filed. At a time in February, the school system should announce school assignments for the next school year. With such an early assignment, new schools may reach out to incoming students during the Spring semester with information and get-acquainted sessions.

Prior to January, parents and their children should be encouraged to visit Parent Information Centers, visit schools, visit school recruitment fairs and gather as much information as possible about schools and the variety of programs that they offer.

Student assignments should be made at a time certain rather than on a rolling basis so that disadvantaged population groups are not further disadvantaged by people who have a good understanding of how bureaucratic systems work and can usurp available seats first. When all assignments are made at a stated time, random lottery may be used to distribute scarce resources (seats in schools that are preferred by many people) in a fair way. After the first assignment period, which should involve 80 to 90 percent of all students, the remaining assignments may be made on a rolling or monthly basis.

The school system through the Parent Information Center and in other

ways should issue a variety of announcement about the sign-up period and indicate where application forms for school assignments may be obtained and filed. All students in rising grades (kindergarten, fifth grade and eighth grade for a school system consisting of elementary, middle and high schools) should receive application forms in the mail. Special attention should be given to informing families for whom English is not their first language.

Assignments should be made for all kinds of schools that are subject to the choice process at the same time. When students are assigned to magnet schools and regular school at different times, this arrangement is a signal that the education these schools provide is not of the same quality. Thus, when possible, all students should be assigned to all schools and to all school programs during the regular sign-up period.

As stated earlier, all assignments are permanent. After receiving an assignment for the entering grade of an educational level, a student is not assigned again unless he or she wishes to transfer to another school or moves out of a zone. Students who move out of one student attendance zone may remain in their school of assignment until the end of the school year and then must choose another school in their new student attendance zone for the next school year. Students who change their residential location but who remain within their current student attendance zone may continue as a member of the student body in their current school of enrollment.

Students who do not have a permanent residence and who have been declared homeless by a governmental or social service agency may enroll in school in any zone, if a school district has multiple student attendance zones. Homeless students will be assured stable school assignments even though they may live in several temporary shelters during the course of a year that are located in different student attendance zones.

Student Assignments and the Waiting List

Students are assigned to schools in which instructional space is available and in accordance with their rank-ordered preferences. Students must choose at least two schools and many chose as many schools as they wish but must rank-order all of their choices. Since an overwhelming proportion of students receive their first, second or third choice, student application forms need not provide space for more than five choices. Students should be required to chose at least two schools. An application is incomplete if one school only is listed.

If a student does not file a rank-ordered school preference form or cannot be assigned to a school of choice, the student will be administratively assigned to a school within his or her student attendance zones that is nearest to the student's home in which instructional space is available. Our experience has

been that less than 10 percent of the students in a school system in which Controlled Choice has been properly implemented are administratively or mandatorily assigned to a school not choose.

All students who do not receive their first-choice school will be automatically placed on a waiting list for that school. Students who are mandatorily assigned, may be placed on a waiting list for their first-choice or second-choice school. Waiting lists should be cleared when space becomes available and will be subject to the plan's racial fairness guidelines. Students and their parents who reject the opportunity to be moved from the waiting list to a school of choice when a seat is offered will be removed from the list.

How long a waiting list should be maintained is a policy issue that should be decided by each school district. To prevent disruption and to maintain stability and continuity, we recommend the waiting list should be maintained for all schools and programs of choice until the end of the first "marking period" in the school year.

Transportation

Transportation is provided for all students who reside beyond the walk zone of their assigned school, as defined by state or local law. Students who move into another student attendance zone but who elect to remain in a current school of enrollment outside that zone until the end of the school are responsible for providing their own transportation to and from school.

School Improvement

Schools that are overchosen by all racial groups–that is, schools which are first- or second-choice schools–are identified annually as overchosen schools and should be publicly listed each year as a way of identifying for the public educational programs that are most attractive and that could be replicated.

Also, schools that are least chosen each year by all racial groups during the sign-up period (least chosen as first-choice or second-choice schools) should be publicly listed. For these schools, the central administration and zone council should develop a method of providing technical assistance, resources, and, if necessary, changes in personnel to upgrade such schools. A major goal of Controlled Choice is to enhance and magnetize the worst schools or the least chosen schools each year. If this is done consistently, eventually there will not be any "bad" schools. By upgrading a school system from the bottom each year, Controlled Choice promotes excellence without compromising equity.

Chapter 3

Community Organization

Introduction

Community organization theory supports and sustains the Controlled Choice approach to school desegregation and school improvement. Robert Axelrod's idea that each level of government "is able to absorb no more than a certain amount of conflict of interest before the disputes at that level become too severe for the democratic process to handle" (Axelrod 1970:155) has informed our perspective in designing a community organizational structure to assist in the implementation of Controlled Choice. The structure should be multidimensional and multilevel, including a vertical and horizontal network of organizations and associations.

In the implementation of this new approach to school desegregation and school improvement, we try to avoid the organizational problems that Richard Elmore calls "forward mapping" (Elmore 1982:18-35). It "begins at the top of the process with as clear a statement as possible of the policymakers intent, and proceeds through a sequence of increasingly more specific steps to define what is expected of implementors at each level" (Elmore 1982:19) as if policymakers--for example, school superintendents and their staff, or Boards of Education--"control the organizational, political and technological processes that affect implementation" (Elmore 1982:20). Elmore asserts that "most of what happens in the implementation process cannot be explained by the intentions and directions of policymakers" (Elmore 1982:20).

We find "backward mapping" alone--that is, establishing a relatively precise target at the lowest level of the system and then backing up through the structure of implementing agencies, asking at each level "what is the ability of this unit to affect the behavior that is the target of the policy?" or "what resources does this unit require to move ahead the implementation process?" (Elmore 1982:21)--of limited value too.

The community organization implementation strategy that Controlled Choice follows is that of establishing a structure that can harmonize formal authority that, according to Elmore, travels from top to bottom and informal authority that travels from bottom to top (Elmore 1982:23). The decisionmaking structure must embrace both kinds of authority. Neither formal nor informal

authority (or forward mapping and backward mapping) is better than its opposite; which is to say, ideas and policies that originate at the top have limitations as do ideas and policies that originate at the bottom. Policymaking is best that integrates ideas that originate from a number of different sources.

Returning to Axelrod's notion mentioned earlier, we declare that all power and authority centralized at the bottom, at the "grassroots" level is just as harmful as all power and authority centralized at the top. Conflict overload is one outcome of any centralization of power and authority; when power and authority are distributed widely among a network of administrative units, legislative factions and interest groups (Kirst and Jung, 1982:122), there is some protection against the negative outcomes of centralization. School-based management, for example, has become a popular administrative innovation. It is a grassroots approach. However, individual schools need broader support to negotiate with central policymaking and administrative authorities to obtain necessary resources. Local-based planning and support alone is insufficient to effectively deal with higher power. More will be said later in this chapter about community organization and vertical linkages and the kinds of relationships that ought to exist between local and external community groups.

Robert Dahl has written persuasively about the benefits of "a pluralistic solution" in community decisionmaking (Dahl 1967:22-24). He states that "the existence of multiple centers of power, none of which is wholly sovereign, will help (may indeed be necessary) to tame power...and to settle conflicts peacefully" (Dahl 1967:24). These are likely outcomes of a pluralistic solution because coercion is reduced, minorities are provided opportunities to exercise veto action over proposals and plans perceived to be extremely harmful, and negotiation that is essential in resolving conflict peacefully is constant. Thus, mutual benefit and a double victory are likely outcomes of a pluralistic solution.

The authors of Controlled Choice do not regard complex organizations as barriers to the implementation of education public policy (Elmore 1982:23), as some policy analysts (such as John Chubb) so regard them (Chubb 1989:5-10). Rather, the components of complex organizations are viewed as "instruments to be capitalized on and modified in the pursuit of policy objectives" (Elmore 1982:23). As stated by Elmore, "organizations can be remarkably effective devices for working out difficult public problems" (Elmore 1982:23).

In many communities, school authorities in the central administration have devoted much attention to systemic ways of achieving school reform. And school authorities at the building level have devoted much attention to school-based management. These efforts at different ends of the administrative hierarchy represent the forward and backward mapping mentioned by Elmore that are not effective unless linked with each other by a mediating structure.

The Delineation of Community Zones

Controlled Choice brings these two approaches together in advisory and/or decisionmaking groups at the zone level. In Boston, the school system under a Controlled Choice plan adopted in 1989 was divided into three relatively large, heterogeneous student attendance zones. To coordinate planning activities including those originating at the school building level and the central administration level, Zone Superintendents and Zone School Improvement Councils were proposed. This office and structure was created for the purpose of strengthening educational offerings and decentralizing administrative leadership. The zone superintendents were part of the Superintendent's Cabinet.

Because Controlled Choice places a responsibility upon each school to make itself attractive to students, some educational planning must be decentralized to the school building level. Individual schools may form teams consisting of parents, teachers, and concerned citizens to assist in planning ways of becoming more attractive. State education reform legislation in Massachusetts mandate such councils. In some local education agencies, planning structures at the school building level are required. As stated earlier, our experience has revealed that standing alone (even with advisors and advocates) a single school has difficulty making a case to central administration and top policymakers for the additional resources it needs to enhance its attractiveness. By supporting and endorsing the proposals developed by a single school, the Zone Superintendent and the Zone School Improvement Council can make a difference.

Central administrators and School Board policymakers tend to give weight to the recommendations of the zonewide staff and to members of a zonewide planning group because, under Controlled Choice, their primary responsibility is to give oversight to all programs and services in a zone. They do this for the purpose of ensuring that the range and quality of programs and services in their zone is similar to the range and quality elsewhere.

If Zone Superintendents and Zone School Improvement Councils perform their monitoring and advocacy responsibilities appropriately, no child in the school district will be disadvantaged educationally because of where one lives, since all students within an attendance zone have access to all of its schools and all attendance zones are more or less equal. Thus, zonewide authorities can help harmonize top down policies and bottom up plans. The zone office is a place that accommodates continuous negotiations between the top and the bottom. As observed by Dahl, "whenever uniform policies are likely to be costly, difficult, or troublesome in pluralistic democracies the tendency is to find ways by which these policies can be made by smaller groups of like-minded people who enjoy a high degree of legal independence" (Dahl 1967:23). The zone officer and planning council is such a group.

In summary, the zone authorities identify successful school improvements elsewhere that should be part of the educational offerings in their zone, review and approve individual school improvement plans, monitor school student body profiles to determine their relative conformity to or deviation from racial fairness guidelines, consult with less attractive schools on ways of enhancing their offerings, and facilitate staff-development and inservice professional training opportunities.

While the zone arrangement is a valuable way of harmonizing top down and bottom up planning, central office administrators tend to resist the presence of zone authorities. To overcome this resistance, central office staff and building administrators should be consulted regularly in the development of a Controlled Choice Student Assignment Plan. They should be appointed to membership on a planning team that meets regularly with staff or consultants responsible for designing a new student assignment plan. Their wisdom can be of value on planning sub-committees concerned with magnet schools, parent information centers, the creation of new zones, and curriculum innovations. Involving central and building administrators in the planning phase is a way of bringing them on board and muting their opposition to new arrangements that are necessary and essential in developing a student assignment plan that is fair.

The title of the zone officer may vary. Some school systems may prefer the label Zone Coordinator rather than Zone Superintendent. Regardless of the title, the function is more or less the same. Zone officers accomplish a measure of decentralization within a school system by harmonizing top down and bottom up planning as well as formal and informal authority.

And the zone officer performs his or her work best when working with a Council that is diversified in the racial and ethnic ancestry of members who represent parents, professional educators, local business and community leaders and linguistic and special education advocacy groups. A Council, of course, does not have the policymaking authority of the School Board; indeed, its authority is derived from and delegated by the School Board. Essentially, the Council is a recommending and negotiating agency.

Parent Information Centers

Parent Information Centers also should be recognized as a community organizational component of Controlled Choice. Students who have the privilege of choosing a school of enrollment from amongst several schools may need help in arriving at an appropriate decision. Parent Information Centers are designed to provide the help that may be needed. They should be conceptualized as outreach services to the community. Selling themselves to students and their parents as exciting and interesting learning environments is the responsibility of

schools, not parent information centers. These centers are designed and commissioned as advocates for families who are served by schools.

Parent Information Centers should be repositories of written and oral information about each school. They should be authorized to conduct school tours for families and to hold zonewide information meetings. They should fully explain to the satisfaction of each school patron the sign-up process for which the Parent Information Center is an intake point. To perform these functions adequately, the staff of the Center that may be part-time and fill-time parents of students or of former students should reflect the racial and linguistic diversity of a zone's resident student population and should speak a variety of languages. If each zone of a school system is large enough to have its' own Parent Information Center, then the Zone Superintendent may supervise it.

Parent Information Centers also may serve as the setting for other health and social service agencies for school-age children. By supporting and sustaining Parent Information Centers, public school systems may reach out to the community in new and different ways.

The Broker Function of Planners

In Controlled Choice, the planner is at once a broker and an advocate. As a broker, the planner should meet with a variety of individuals who have similar and different interests and similar and different opinions. Some discussions should be held with individuals and some should be held with individuals in groups.

The planner should try to find common ground between competing interests. In general, we have found more agreement than disagreement among citizens affiliated with dissimilar racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups regarding definitions of quality education. What some citizens believed was an unsolvable difference frequently could be resolved by proposing a new method that jointly fulfills disparate goals. As stated above, one role of the planner is to find common ground between uncommon groups. For this reason, it is appropriate to classify the planner as a community broker.

In Brockton, Massachusetts, we discovered that the Mayor and business leaders were interested in renewing the central city sector. Education leaders wanted to renovate a landmark school in the downtown area. By proposing that Arnon School in the City's center become a super magnet school available to all students in Brockton, we as consultants united governmental, economic, and educational interests.

All methods and decisions offered by the planners concerning new and different ways of delivering public educational services should be anchored in the principle of fairness. Whenever a proposal advanced by one group is excluded

from the final plan, the exclusion has to be justified. The fairness test prevents a community group from being ignored in an arbitrary and capricious way.

Inclusivity and Fairness Planning

Fairness, of course, is not an abstract concept. Fairness is the best outcome that can be negotiated directly or indirectly among all stakeholders who jointly will experience the consequences of the outcome. Recognizing that human decisonmaking procedures are seldom perfect, one still is obligated to abide by the negotiated solution, if burdens associated with the outcome are more or less evenly distributed over different groups and individuals in society who participated in the negotiation sessions (Rawls 1971:355).

Clearly, the most unfair practice is not having the privilege to participate directly or indirectly in negotiation sessions. As planners, we talk to all groups in the community that have expressed an interest in public education. The concerns expressed by all groups should be factored into the final solution. Thus, the planners must sincerely embrace the principle of inclusiveness. In community planning, no group is entitled to have its way if it can be demonstrated that the interest of one group has harmful effects for other groups. Usually, community groups are unaware of the harmful effects their proposals have on others. A role of planning consultants, therefore, is to make known these facts. Such knowledge is the foundation for negotiations and for working out an arrangement that is mutually beneficial to all.

Consultation with Community Groups

Planners who function as brokers are obligated to consult community groups frequently and to feedback to these groups preliminary designs for their reactions. There is a higher probability of obtaining consensus among a high proportion of the local population when the planning process is public and not secretive. In Boston, for example, we involved virtually every political and educational constituency in the planning process, including: the Mayor, the School Committee, the Superintendent of Schools, representatives from the NAACP and Urban League, plaintiff's counsel, the Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts, city and school department planners and central office bureaucrats, the Boston Teachers Union, City Councilors, principals and headmasters, business and community organizations, religious leaders, bilingual and special needs children and their parents and lawyers, the Citywide Parents Council, the Citywide Education Coalition, and a cross-section of parents representing all races, language groups and geographic areas of the city. Our Planning Criteria for Boston were adopted by the Mayor and the Boston School Committee. In the

planning criteria was this statement: "the development and implementation of a new student assignment plan...can only be achieved if the planning process is carried out with integrity and the planners maintain independence, objectivity and work collaboratively with all segments of the community." Continuous communication with all sectors of the community is an essential community organizational stratagem in effective school desegregation and school improvement planning. Such planning is necessary for court-ordered as well as voluntary school desegregation plans.

In addition to communicating with all sectors of the community, we took copious notes on the ideas expressed by various groups and included a section in our final report that summarized what we heard. This summary suggested to the public that their ideas were responded to seriously. The section summarizing what we heard also enabled some groups to realize that what they wanted from public education may have been the opposite of what another group wanted. Thus, the section of our final report on "what we heard" is a way of preparing the public for the inevitable compromises that result from community planning.

We were retained in 1989 to help Milwaukee revise its student assignment plan. The Milwaukee school system was under a 1979 court-order to desegregate its public schools. The court-order incorporated a settlement agreement that was flawed because it prohibited any all-white schools but permitted approximately twenty all-black schools to continue as racially segregated institutions and required only 75 percent of the citywide student body to be educated in racially balanced schools. Moreover, the 1979 court-ordered plan placed a disproportionate responsibility on black students to seek a desegregated education; nine times more blacks than whites were transported to and from school for the purpose of achieving racial balance. Ten years after the court-order, twice as many blacks as whites still used transportation to attend desegregated schools. The Milwaukee court-ordered plan introduced a number of specialty or magnet schools. Both white and black families expressed displeasure regarding access to these schools. A majority of Milwaukee students could not attend these schools because they were few in number. Moreover, a perception among many citizens was that the non-specialty schools were second class and did not offer the same high quality education found in specialty or magnet schools. In summary, the Milwaukee school system had a desegregation plan that was defective because of inequity: full desegregation was mandated for all white children but not for all black children; enriched educational opportunities were disproportionately reserved for white and affluent students; the burden of using transportation to achieve desegregation was disproportionately experienced by blacks.

We developed for Milwaukee one of the best Controlled Choice plans that we have ever developed: It divided the city into two student attendance zones that had to be equivalent; a zone coordinating board was created in each zone

and commissioned to take necessary action to make its zone equivalent in the range and quality of educational services to the other zone; school building leaders were required to prepare plans that would make their schools more attractive; all school programs within schools and classrooms were required to desegregate according to racial fairness guidelines; effective schools, including specialty schools, were to be replicated; fair ways of allocating instructional space for bilingual and special education programs were recommended; siblings were permitted to attend the same school; students who live near a school were given assignment priority, according to racial fairness guidelines. The plan also proposed a manageable timetable for implementation.

As stated above, the plan, although comprehensive and fairer than the existing student assignment plan, was never implemented. We believe the plan was never implemented because we were not permitted to involve the community at the beginning of the planning stage. We consulted regularly with staff of the school system's central administration and with members of the School Board but never conducted focus groups in the community. Consequently, citizens were suspicious of the motives of the planners and did not believe that the plan reflected their special concerns. At the public hearings held after the plan was developed, these suspicions were verbalized.

We learned that education planners should involve the community at the beginning of the planning effort. We did this in Boston, Brockton, and Somerville, Massachusetts. And our plans received approval in these cities because of community involvement early-on. For example in one city, after a joint meeting between the City Council and the School Board in which Controlled Choice was thoroughly discussed and the concerns and goals of elected officials for public education in the city were expressed, the Mayor told the press that Controlled Choice should be given a chance. This is the kind of affirmation received when all sectors of the community are involved in the planning process before a final plan is drafted.

In school desegregation and school improvement planning, the stakes are too high for decisions to be left entirely to the judgment of professionals. And the issues are too complex to be left entirely to the preferences of parents. The public interest is best served by a planning process that draws into education planning professional skills and a variety of private and personal preferences. This is what Controlled Choice attempts to do.

Controlled Choice: A Plan for All Groups

Controlled Choice is fair to all students in a community. It is not designed for the purpose of bringing whites only back to city school systems. It is not designed to attract middle class students only. It should be of value to English-speaking students and to those for whom English is not their first language. Controlled Choice is designed to be fair to whomever is there. Controlled Choice is for all groups.

Since 1992 when our revised Controlled Choice Student Assignment Plan was adopted in Boston, we have seen an increase of about 1,000 students each year over the enrollment the previous year for three consecutive years. In Cambridge, the proportion of children attending public school increased by 11 percentage points only five years after a controlled choice student assignment plan was adopted in 1980. (Alves and Willie, 1987:86). Thus, Controlled Choice seems to be attracting more students to attend public schools than attended them in the past under other school desegregation plans.

Vertical Community Linkages

In Controlled Choice we alert local education agencies to the fact that many community action efforts, and especially those having to do with education, have vertical linkages with extra-community systems as well as horizontal linkages with other institutions within the community. "Generally," according to Roland Warren, "these vertical ties are stronger than the horizontal ties among unites of any single community" (Warren 1963:242). The vertical linkages are structured along bureaucratic administrative lines that are more or less clearly prescribed in terms of objectives and operating procedures. For example, the local education agency derives its authority from the state education agency in clearly prescribed ways.

With reference to school desegregation, local School Board members in some communities would not have taken affirmative actions to integrate their schools unless required to do so by extra-community authorities. By practice, if not by national law, education in the United States is becoming a universal right. And "universal rights and responsibilities...should be guaranteed at an authoritative level such as that of state [or Federal] government, that is sufficiently removed from the daily activities of the people to avoid yielding to pressures from individuals who disagree with them" (Willie 1984:33). States, in particular provide external leverage when they formulate principles regarding equal access, monitor the practices of local education agencies to ensure their adherence to these principles, and offer resources, technical advice and assistance to localities. States as well as the Federal government can encourage local education agencies

to fulfill requirements of equity by evoking sanctions against localities that violate these requirements.

Beyond providing sanctions, agencies external to the local community may encourage local agencies to abide by equity principles by providing incentives. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, for example, provided support to school districts to provide in-service programs for assisting the instructional staff in dealing with problems caused by desegregation. Subsequent Federal legislation provided resources to local school districts that established magnet schools to assist in the achievement of desegregation. The State of Massachusetts offered assistance to local school districts to rehabilitate a school system's physical plant if the rehabilitation would further the cause of systemwide school desegregation.

Since Controlled Choice aims to eventually magnetize all schools so that each is unique and attractive, we urge local education agencies to establish relationships with state and federal agencies so that increased and extra-community resources may be obtained to enhance local building and educational programs. Incentives obtained from extra-community sources have made the difference in encouraging the adoption of a favorable desegregation policy by some reluctant School Boards.

School Desegregation and White Flight

A final community organization issue in school desegregation that Controlled Choice seems to retard is the flight of whites from school systems in central cities. David Armour believes that "...whites do flee desegregation plans that mandatorily assign or bus students to schools outside their neighborhoods" (Armour 1980:213). We found in Cambridge stable desegregated outcomes that resulted from implementation of a Controlled Choice student assignment plan that is not neighborhood-based. Since the plan was implemented in 1980, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of school-age children attending the public schools, "including a 32% increase in new white students and a 13% increase in new minority students during a four-year period" (Alves and Willie 1987:85).

A study of Atlanta, Boston, Milwaukee and Seattle revealed that Milwaukee and Boston with voluntary and mandatory school desegregation plans, respectively, lost 11 to 12 percent of their total population between 1970 and 1980 and that Atlanta with a less comprehensive school desegregation plan lost 29 percent while Seattle also with a less comprehensive school desegregation plan lost only 7 percent of its total population between 1970 and 1980. Apparently, population losses in large central cities are due to factors other than the comprehensiveness of a school desegregation plan and also its voluntary or mandatory requirement. A correlation of the four cities by rank-order reveals a perfect indi-

rect association between the proportion of total population loss during the decade and the proportion of total population consisting of people of color.

The 1970 non-white populations in Boston and Milwaukee, were similar, 18.2 percent and 15.6 percent, respectively. And the overall decade loss in total population for these cities also was similar (12 and 11 percent). Seattle which had the lowest percentage loss in total population during the decade had a 1970 people-of-color population of only 12.6 percent. Atlanta, which had the highest percentage loss of total population had a 1970 people-of-color population of 51.6 percent. Thus, the rate of withdrawal of whites from central cities seems to be more a function of the size of the non-white population in central cities than a consequence of the kind of school desegregation plan in operation and its requirements. Our conclusion differs from that asserted by Armour and others.

A report published by the Committee on Economic Development in 1960 found that "middle income families with children have been departing for the suburbs since the end of World War II." (Committee on Economic Development 1960:18). The beginning of the trek to the suburbs in significant numbers, therefore, occurred nearly a decade before the U.S. Supreme Court's *Brown* school desegregation decision of 1954. This C.E.D. report issued a generation ago predicted that before the end of the twentieth century, three-fifths of the people living in metropolitan areas would be living outside central cities (Committee on Economic Development 1960:4). This prediction has been fulfilled. All of this is to say that the increase in suburban growth in the United States among whites is a phenomenon that came before court-orders for school desegregation and that the association, if any, between the two variables is a spurious correlation. School desegregation began after white withdrawal from cities was in progress; this in turn casts doubts on any cause and effect association between white flight and school desegregation.

Reynolds Farley examined 125 school districts, each containing 100,000 people or more in northern and southern regions of the United States. He discovered that "changes in white enrollment were not strongly linked to changes in school segregation," that some districts from which whites had moved experienced much desegregation while others experienced little, if any, change in the segregation pattern of their schools." These findings led him to conclude that "there is not a significant relationship between school integration and white flight" (Farley 1975:7).

Controlled Choice permits us to put aside untrue, distracting community myths about school desegregation and enables us to proceed with the serious business of designing student assignment plans that are beneficial and fair to all.

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Chapter 4

Controlled Choice in Boston

We conclude this book by examining how Controlled Choice works in Boston. Boston has had a Controlled Choice Student Assignment Plan since 1989. We offer evaluations of the plan from two different sources–an evaluation by the designers of the plan and an evaluation by Bain and Company, a consulting firm, that was requested by the Office of the Mayor and the Private Industry Council of Boston. These evaluations will indicate the extent to which the plan does or does not achieve its three-fold goal of desegregation, school improvement and choice.

Boston has had three student assignment plans since the finding of liability by the Court in 1974. The first student assignment plan was developed by the State Education Department. It was a partial plan that desegregated only about 80 (or 40 percent) of the school system's 201 schools and it, as stated by court-appointed expert Robert Dentler, left untouched most of the virtually all-white schools in the system. This plan was implemented in 1974 and focused on school desegregation only.

A second plan was developed by a panel of four court-appointed masters and two-court appointed experts and implemented in 1975. This comprehensive plan reorganized the Boston Public Schools into one citywide magnet school zone and eight community student attendance districts. The latter included schools to which students were mandatorily assigned. The 1975 plan dealt with educational as well as desegregation issues.

After thirteen years of court-ordered and court-monitored school desegregation, the U.S. District Court gave Boston the privilege of developing a new student assignment plan. However, the Court explicitly stated that the new plan would not be acceptable if it resegregated the Boston Public Schools.

In 1988, the Mayor of Boston retained two education planners, Charles V. Willie and Michael Alves, to develop a third student assignment plan that would give parents and their children greater choice, maintain racial fairness and improve the quality of education of all students. The outcome of this effort was the *Boston Controlled Choice Student Assignment Plan* (Alves and Willie, 1990). The Mayor said the plan was an "unprecedented collaborative process in which hundreds of parents, advocates and educators...had significant and ongoing input" (Flynn Dec. 13, 1988:1).

Alves and Willie called controlled choice "a holistic desegregation tech-

nique...particularly well-suited to big city school districts which have used a variety of techniques but have been unable to fully desegregate all...schools" (Alves and Willie 1990:22). One reason for the effectiveness of controlled choice is that it achieves several outcomes simultaneously. For example, it advances the school system while enhancing individuals, is grounded in equity and fairness and promotes school improvement while guaranteeing student body diversity and offering choice.

Before the Controlled Choice plan was implemented in Boston, the Massachusetts State Education Department and the U.S. District Court reviewed it. The State Commissioner of Education and the U.S. District Judge were satisfied that the plan, if properly implemented, would not resegregate the Boston Public Schools. Thus, May 31, 1990, the Court released Boston from continuous supervision but in it's Final Judgment (*Morgan v. Burke,* 1990) permanently enjoined the school system from discriminating on the basis of race in the operation of the public schools of the city of Boston and from creating, promoting or maintaining racial segregation in any school or other facility in the Boston public school system (Final Judgment *Morgan v. Burke* 1990:4). This enjoinment was one of the standards that the Boston Controlled Choice Plan had to meet.

In 1992, the designers of the Boston Controlled Choice Student Assignment Plan were retained by the Boston School Committee to "fine tune" the plan that was adopted in 1989. This is a report of their evaluation after the fine tuning.

An Evaluation of Controlled Choice by the Plan Designers

The Boston Controlled Choice plan is limited to the Boston school district and, therefore, is fundamentally different from interdistrict or so-called "statewide" choice plans that should not be confused with these types of choice plans. In the Boston Controlled Choice Plan, students enroll in Boston public schools only. However, the three examination schools--The Boston Latin School, the Boston Latin Academy and the O'Bryant High School of Science and Mathematics--are exempted from procedures of the Controlled Choice Plan.

The consultants prepared their first report assessing the Boston Controlled Choice Plan in September 1992. The consultants found that some features of the plan had been inappropriately changed by the School Committee. For example, siblings were assigned to different schools when parents preferred that all of their children attend the same school. Because of a "random number" procedure inserted into the plan after its adoption, hundreds of entry-grade students were wrongfully denied first-choice assignments. This procedure gave priority assignments according to the random number received by students rather than accord-

ing to their rank-ordered school choice. Also, the application and assignment process was fractionated into a protracted and complex set of "rounds" that unnecessarily delayed assignments for some entry grade students until the summer months for the fall semester. Too many mandatory assignments were given to students. The consultants determined that these negative effects were due to the introduction of the so-called "three-round, random-number" procedures that were not part of the original Controlled Choice Plan adopted by the School Committee in 1989.

The School Committee asked the consultants to fine tune the Controlled Choice Plan by a) streamlining the school choice application process so that entry-grade students could receive assignments for the next school year in January or February; b) guaranteeing same-school attendance by siblings; and c) accommodating the wishes of students who chose to attend a school within walking distance of their home. The School Committee also wanted more students assigned to their first- or second-choice schools. These goals were incorporated into a revised Controlled Choice Plan for regular education students that was approved by the School Committee in November 1992.

The revised Controlled Choice Student Assignment Plan was designed to achieve these goals and more. It prevented resegregation by providing all racial and ethnic groups genuine proportional access to all schools and programs. It allowed parents and students to make multiple school selections by their own rank-order of preference. It identified schools and programs that should be replicated because they were overchosen by all racial groups, and it identified underchosen schools that should be improved.

The consultants explained that the plan was designed to achieve all of these goals simultaneously. Other student assignment plans that purport to contain features similar to Controlled Choice fail because they focus on choice or school improvement or desegregation singly or sequentially and not simultaneously. When implemented together, these essential features have a synergistic effect that enhances the entire school system. Simultaneity is emphasized as a central or foundational concept in Controlled Choice.

Since the Controlled Choice Student Assignment Plan was first implemented in 1989, the Boston school system has been organized into three heterogeneous zones for elementary and middle school assignments and one citywide zone for all of the system's high schools. A student attendance zone reflects the racial and socioeconomic distribution of the school-going population in the total school district. In Boston, the East Zone, West Zone, and North Zone are drawn so that each zone includes about one-third of the system's elementary and middle school students. Each zone contained twenty or more elementary schools and five or more middle schools. Parent Information Centers are established in each zone. They are outreach services to families with school-age chil-

dren.

All elementary, middle and high school students already enrolled in the Boston Public Schools before Controlled Choice were allowed to remain in their school of enrollment until they completed that school's highest grade. Thus, the new plan affected only those students who desired or needed a new school assignment, such as students transitioning into the system's entry-grades for elementary, middle, and high school; newly enrolling students; and students requesting a voluntary school transfer. Since the plan's inception in 1989, no Boston student has been involuntarily reassigned out of a Boston public school. And once enrolled, all students assigned by the Controlled Choice Plan are guaranteed continuity in their educational experience until they complete their school's highest grade.

The consultants recommended in 1989 the immediate development of a comprehensive educational reform plan for the system's high schools. This planning recommendation was never implemented. Therefore, the educational improvement features of the Boston Controlled Choice Plan have been limited primarily to the system's elementary and middle schools.

The revised Controlled Choice Plan gives students enrolling in entry grades at least one month to visit schools and complete their pre-printed school choice application forms. Applications are submitted to school officials in early February. Each student is encouraged to make at least five rank-ordered choices of schools and is required to choose at least two schools.

Available seats for entry-grade students in each school are allocated according to racial fairness guidelines. These guidelines grant all racial and ethnic populations proportional access to all public school opportunities in their zone. Schools are permitted to vary by plus or minus ten percentage points from the racial fairness guidelines.

Because of this fairness feature, along with school improvements and increased educational choice, student enrollment in Boston is increasing. There were approximately 1,000 more students enrolled in the school system for the 1993-1994 school year than in the previous school year. Analysis of the enrollment data before adoption of Controlled Choice and now shows that the system has gained approximately 4,500 or 8 percent more students since the inception of the new plan in 1989. These increases in Boston's student population are similar to the Cambridge experience after it implemented Controlled Choice in the early 1980s.

According to the system's October 1, 1993 enrollment report, the Boston Public Schools enroll approximately 63,000 students in 117 schools. Approximately 43,000 regular education students or about two-thirds of Boston's total student enrollment are assigned under the provisions of the Controlled Choice plan. By racial and ethnic group, approximately 50 percent of these regular edu-

cation students are Black, 23 percent are White, 18 percent are Latino, 8 percent are Asian, and less than 1 percent is Native American. These students are distributed among the various levels of the school system in the following way: 15 percent, Kindergarten; 38 percent elementary schools; 20 percent middle schools; and 27 percent high schools.

Presented are the key results of the February 1994 assignments of entry-grade students for the 1994-1995 school year:

- A total 8,525 regular education students received assignments in entry-grades 1, 6, and 9 during February for the 1994-1995 school year. This number is 1,044 more regular education students than received February assignments a year ago and represents more than 85 percent of all the entry-grade students expected to enroll in the Boston Public Schools in the 1994-1995 school year.
- According to data prepared by the Department of Implementation of the Boston Public Schools, 6, 862 or 81 percent of all entry-grade students were assigned to their first-choice school; 7,627 or nearly 90 percent were assigned to their first- or second-choice school; and 7,878 or 92 percent were assigned to one of their top three schools of choice for the 1994-1995 school year. These results are similar to what happened in the 1993-1994 school year.
- The same data show that nearly 8,000 or about 93 percent of all entry-grade students were assigned to one of their rank-ordered school's of choice. Of the students who received a school of choice, 89 percent were White, 95 percent were Black, and 94 percent were Hispanic, Asian and other minority students.
- Less than 7 percent of the entry-grade students who received February assignments were mandatorily assigned to a school that they did not choose. Of the students who received mandatory assignments about one-half were assigned to their walk-zone school and about one-half or 3.5 percent were assigned to schools that may require transportation. Prior to the implementation of the 1989 Controlled Choice plan, school of choice assignments were made to only about 30 percent of Boston's public school students who were enrolled in one of the system's court-ordered 22 magnet schools; at least 70 percent of the other students were mandatorily assigned by geocode to a school in one of Boston's former eight community-districts.
- Of the Grade 1 students who received February elementary school assignments, 85 percent were assigned to their first-choice school, 91 percent were assigned to their first- or second-choice school, 93 percent were assigned to one of their top three elementary schools of choice, and only 6.7 percent received mandatory assignments.
- Of the Grade 6 students who received February middle school assignments, 79 percent were assigned to their first-choice school, 91 percent were assigned to their first- or second-choice school, 93 percent were assigned to one of their top three schools of choice, and only 6.5 percent were mandatorily assigned.
- Of the Grade 9 students who received February high school assignments to one of the system's non-examination schools, 74 percent were assigned to their first-choice school, 85 percent were assigned to their first- or second-choice high school, 91 percent were assigned to one of their top three high schools of choice, and 7 percent

were mandatorily assigned. The consultants explain that the lower accommodation of first choice Grade 9 assignments for all racial groups is due to the fact that nearly 60 percent of the students preferred only four of the system's 12 non-examination high schools as their first-or second-choice school. This fact means that immediate attention should be given to the quality of education provided at the high school level since so many students have chosen so few schools.

- Less than 40 percent of the entry-grade students selected their "walk zone" school as their first-choice. Of the Boston students who selected their walk zone school, at least 91 percent were assigned to that school as their first- or second-choice. The fact that less than 40 percent of the entry-grade students selected a walk-zone school as their first-choice means that Boston students are probably choosing a school of quality that is compatible with their educational needs and are not choosing a school merely because of convenience.
- The Boston assignment data further show that the preference for a walk zone school decreases among all racial groups as students advance through the system. According to the most recent school choice data: 64 percent of Whites selected their walk zone school as their first-choice in Grade 1 compared to 45 percent of Whites in Grade 6 and 9; 41 percent of Blacks selected their walk zone school as their first-choice in Grade 1 compared to 33 percent of Blacks in Grade 6 and 17 percent in Grade 9; and 56 percent of Hispanic and Asian students selected their walk zone school as their first-choice in Grade 1 compared to 39 percent in Grade 6 and 30 percent in Grade 9. The fact that fewer Blacks at the elementary level chose a walk-zone school is due, in part, to the fact that several of their neighborhood schools were closed during the early years of court-ordered school desegregation because of poor physical condition of the buildings. Also, Blacks seem to be more inclined than some other population groups to venture beyond their neighborhoods in search of a better education. A majority of all students chose to use transportation to go to schools that may be distant from their homes because of the perceived quality of education that these schools offer. Even when students are given a priority for enrollment in a walk-zone school, most students reject this priority and chose a school that seems to be more compatible with their educational needs.

Since nine out of every ten students who chose a walk-zone school in Boston were granted their choice, the issue of access to neighborhood schools has been addressed in a way that is fair to all. Students who prefer to enroll in neighborhood schools have the opportunity to walk to their first- and second-choice schools and students who prefer other schools get to enroll in their first- or second-choice schools.

The designers of Controlled Choice stated that the current Boston assignment experience reveals the call for mandatory neighborhood school attendance zones to be a sentimental call of the past that no longer captures the educational imagination and interests of most students and their parents. Today, they prefer high quality schools of choice rather than schools of convenience and will at-

tend quality schools wherever they are located in the city. This conclusion is based on the fact that 90 percent of the nearly 20,000 students who have been assigned by the Controlled Choice plan over the past two years have been assigned to their first- or second-choice school.

The annual choice process is a valid kind of referendum on the relative attractiveness of Boston's public schools. Many schools in the Boston school system are now trying to make themselves more attractive to all kinds of students. This is a good sign that the public schools are trying to serve all sorts and conditions of students.

An Evaluation of Controlled Choice by Bain and Company

In 1994, City Councilor Peggy Davis-Mullen and Boston University Professor Christine Rossell "released a controversial school assignment proposal that would favor neighborhood schools" *(Boston Globe* 1994:16). The City Councilor also called for "a statistically significant fastidiously designed attitude survey of Boston's parents about neighborhood schools, controlled choice and educational quality" *(Boston Globe* 1994:16). According to the *Boston Globe*, "an independent study could reveal much" (*Boston Globe* 1994:16), but it should be conducted by someone other than Professor Rossell whose "academic antipathy toward the current [architects of the system's controlled choice plan]...may be motivating [her] as much as intellectual curiosity"(*Boston Globe* 1994:16).

At the request of the Mayor's Office and the Boston Private Industry Council, a study of the student assignment process was conducted between June and December 1995 by Bain and Company, a consulting firm (*Boston Globe* 1995:40). A reanalysis of the Bain and Company study and an interpretation of the data are presented.

The survey method was used. Five hundred and five families with children entering kindergarten, first grade, sixth grade and ninth grade (the grades for which the student assignment plan was designed) were randomly selected for interviews. Interviews were conducted by telephone in English and Spanish and averaged thirty minutes. All interviews were conducted by Bain and Company representatives. According to the study report, "survey participants represented all racial groups and all Boston neighborhoods" (Bain and Company 1995:3-6).

The report does not indicate the exact number of Whites, Blacks, Latinos, Asians and members of other racial and ethnic groups interviewed. However, a graph reveals that approximately 49 percent of the families interviewed are African American, 27 percent White, and 24 percent Latino, Asian and members of other racial groups (Bain and Company 1995:4). The citywide student body in kindergarten 2, and grades 1, 6, and 9 is 49 percent African American, 18 percent White and 32 percent Latino, Asian and others. The sample studied

by the Bain Company, therefore, appears to have an overrepresentation of Whites by 9 percentage points and an underrepresentation of the combined populations of Latinos, Asians and people of other racial groups (excluding Blacks) by 8 percentage points compared to the citywide public school population at these grade levels (Office of Planning Research and Development 1994:1). The proportion of Blacks or African Americans in the sample (49 percent) is the same as their proportion in the citywide student body for the four grades included in this study.

The major questions for which answers were sought in the Bain and Company survey were these: (1) Are parents pleased with the controlled choice student assignment plan? (2) Would parents prefer an automatic or mandatory assignment for their child to a neighborhood school rather than having the privilege of choosing schools? (3) Are parents and their children satisfied with the schools that they chose? (4) Why are parents and their children satisfied with the schools they chose?

The Bain and Company study shows that more than 80 percent of the parents are satisfied with the current assignment process. This finding is the opposite of that stated by political scientists Christine Rossell in a report to the U.S. District Court in Illinois. In that report she said, "most parents want neighborhood schools" (Rossell 1995:26).

The Bain and Company study indicates that a majority of all parents are satisfied with the controlled choice student assignment process, even if they did not receive their first-choice school. Indeed, two-thirds or more of the parents with school-going children who were surveyed and did not get their first- or second-choice school said that they were satisfied with the student assignment process. When asked about their preference for the controlled choice method of student assignment versus automatic assignment to a neighborhood school, 72 percent of the households interviewed preferred controlled choice and the options it offers (Bain and Company 1995:3).

While parents in Boston were overwhelmingly satisfied with the controlled choice student assignment process, their level of satisfaction with schools to which they were assigned dropped substantially if they did not get their first or second choice. The proportion of dissatisfied patrons of the public school system exceed 40 percent for individuals who did not receive their prime choices. However, it should be pointed out that among the disappointed patrons, 50 percent still were satisfied with their school of choice, although not highly satisfied. Apparently, the privilege of choosing a school is a satisfying experience in itself, even if one does not get exactly what one wants.

These findings should be pleasing to a school system that has struggled as long and as hard as Boston has struggled to turn around the reputation of its public schools. However, the fact that approximately one-fifth of the patrons

are dissatisfied with both the student assignment process and the schools available for choice is a fact that should be acknowledged. One-fifth is a critical mass that can have a significant impact on a social system, including a public school system, if these individuals remain unhappy and dissatisfied.

The remedy for a dissatisfaction rate of one-fifth does not require a total change in the student assignment process, since most students and their parents are satisfied. Population-specific approaches may be necessary to deal with whatever is troubling or troublesome to the 20 percent residual of dissatisfied patrons. In other words, limited rather than universal change is indicated.

Clearly, most parents in Boston do not wish to return to a student assignment process that automatically or mandatorily assigns their children to neighborhood schools. In view of the fact that not all neighborhood schools are effective learning environments, a return to neighborhood schools would compel some students in some neighborhoods to attend less attractive schools. Such a requirement, of course, is unfair. To overcome the unfairness of the past when some students were compelled to attend neighborhood schools that were segregated and unequal is probably one reason why four-fifths of the public school patrons in Boston prefer the controlled choice student assignment plan and the flexibility that it embraces.

Interviewees were asked "what was the number one reason you had for preferring your top-choice school over your second-choice school?"

When the two categories--quality of education and kinds of programs available are added together, a majority of the parents and their children (55 percent) chose schools for educational reasons. Location which has neighborhood and other implications is the bases for choosing a school as one's #1 choice for only 20 percent of the school patrons. After the first grade, the possibility of walking to school diminishes as a reason for choosing a school as one's top preference. Even in families with first-grade students, the possibility of walking to school is not a priority for a third or more of the families (Bain and Company 1995:12). Thus, Controlled Choice offers the best of alternative possibilities. Families that prefer "walk-to schools" may fulfill their desires and families that prefer quality schools, even if they are outside their neighborhoods may choose these.

From first grade on through middle school and high school, a challenging educational program, including advanced work classes, is the reason most parents and their children choose a school. In terms of subject matter, most parents define schools that offer a quality education as those that emphasize computer instruction, reading programs, mathematics and science. The subject matter of instruction seems to be more important than the size of class for most families in their hierarchy of quality education features.

Finally, the Bain and Company study indicates that parent involvement in schools is a quality-enhancement factor but that parent involvement is less sig-

nificant than "likable teachers and staff". This finding in the Bain and Company study confirms a finding by James Comer that was derived from his New Haven study–that "teachers deliver the critical service in a school and are most responsible for the success or failure of the school in meeting its mission of student learning and development" (Comer 1980:220).

The Bain and Company survey is the independent study called for by the *Boston Globe* and was conducted by "a corporate citizen with a reputation for fairness..." (*Boston Globe* 1994:16). In summary, the study demonstrates that parents and their children by and large are satisfied with the Controlled Choice Student Assignment Plan in Boston, that they prefer exercising choice in the selection of schools rather than receiving automatic and mandatory assignments to neighborhood schools, that they like schools with strong educational programs and that "likable teachers and staff" as well as a rigorous curriculum in reading, mathematics, science and computer instruction are important components in their definition of quality education.

Conclusion

"Forced busing" is no longer an issue in Boston and should not be an issue in any school system that uses the Controlled Choice method of assigning students. A majority of the students in Boston use transportation to go to and from school. But they are bused to schools which they choose rather than to schools to which they are mandatorily assigned. Only 35 to 45 percent of the students choose to enroll in neighborhood schools; 55 to 65 percent do not choose neighborhood schools. The Controlled Choice Plan accommodates all students–those who wish to enroll in neighborhood schools and those who wish to attend a school of choice elsewhere. For these and other reasons, it is fair to all.

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Appendix 1

Choice, Decentralization and Desegregation: The Boston 'Controlled Choice' Plan*

Michael J. Alves and Charles V. Willie

Introduction

The history of the civil rights movement has demonstrated that minority concerns have been ignored repeatedly until the majority has been required by the court to guarantee equality of access and equity in the distribution of common resources. To achieve educational enhancement was the reason blacks and other minorities asked the court to desegregate the public schools.

Conventional choice plans such as 'freedom-of-choice' and 'open enrollment' have been inadequate as methods of achieving effective education. In the past, freedom-of-choice plans were used as a response to the requirements of *Brown* that racially-dual school systems should be dismantled. None of these plans offered real choice or accomplished any meaningful desegregation and eventually were declared inappropriate by the court in the *Green* decision.

Open enrollment plans which retained individual school attendance districts but permitted students to transfer out of them from schools in which they were the majority to schools in which there were a minority were inadequate. They did not provide any incentives for students to choose schools outside their neighborhoods and did not require that schools desegregate. The responsibility to desegregate was not that of the system but was an option left to the parents, many of whom did not want a desegregated public school system and, therefore, did not participate in the plan. And, while magnet schools, if implemented correctly, tend to provide enhanced education on a desegregative basis, they typically have had a limited impact and accommodate no more than one third of the students on a systemwide basis.

Some of the contemporary, choice plans, especially those that are interdistrict, do not require desegregation but leave the option to seek a desegregated education experience up to the student and his or her parents. These plans, which are being initiated primarily by state education authorities, may benefit school systems that receive students who seek out learning environments that are desegregated but do not help segregated schools that are left behind.

Our experience has been that effective educational plans advance school

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systems as well as enhance individuals. Choice plans that do not accomplish both of these goals simultaneously are defective.

In an article that was published in *The Urban Review*, we indicate the limitations of neighborhood-based school improvement plans (Alves and Willie, 1987). Our 1987 article is the background of this discussion. 'Controlled Choice' is particularly well-suited to big-city school districts which have used a variety of techniques but have been unable to fully desegregate all their schools.

'Controlled Choice' allows local officials to consolidate past gains while expanding parent choice and effective desegregation outcomes on a district wide basis. And, in communities that are experiencing desegregation for the first time, 'Controlled Choice' provides an opportunity to avoid the mistakes made by other districts that have relied on mandatory and other traditional assignment methods. With the instrument of 'Controlled Choice', all school districts now have the means to achieve a unitary and instructionally effective system of public education that is permanent.

1980s: The Racial Politics of Innovation

The racial mistrust among elected school officials in Boston is traceable in part, to an irony in the Boston school desegregation case: It is that innovations initially proposed by blacks were made available first to whites if they seemed to be of educational value. In the early 1980s, a split developed among plaintiffs. Some blacks, represented by Attorney Larry Johnson of the Center for Law and Education, asked that the 1975 court-ordered student assignment plan be replaced with one that was more flexible. The Superintendent of Schools acknowledged that more flexible options should be considered, but neither he nor the School Committee ever came forward with a specific proposal for modifying the court-ordered plan (*Boston Globe*, 1982, p.41). Frustrated at being mandatorily assigned into predominantly black schools in white neighborhoods, Johnson and a group of black parents submitted a so-called 'Plaintiff's Freedom of Choice' plan to the Federal Court in 1982. Though the plan was opposed by the NAACP and rejected by the court on the grounds that the proposal 'lacked sufficient detail to determine whether it would be constitutionally adequate and administratively feasible' (*Boston Globe*, 19 November 1982, p. 15), it did include a number of innovative recommendations such as school-based management, eliminating geocodes, education-centered decentralization, increased replication of successful magnet programs in community district schools – ideas which later became popular with whites. Though these reforms were popular with whites, neither the School Committee nor its white Superintendent supported the Plaintiff's plan or intervened on their behalf before the federal court.

School department opposition against changing the court-ordered plan in

response to legitimate black concerns also surfaced when such changes were initiated by the federal court. Judge Garrity proposed a ceiling of 80 per cent on the proportion of students from one race that could be assigned to a school to prevent schools in some communities from resegregating a decade after the original court order. The School Department's chief desegregation officer opposed the ceilings and allegedly said, 'enforcing the ceiling could require giving preferential treatment to black students from these neighborhoods who apply to city-wide magnet schools' (*Boston Globe*, 1985, p. 32). It is strange that a school official in charge of desegregation was concerned about a proposal that would prevent any school in Boston from becoming, in Dentler's words, 'monoethnic' (Dentler and Scott, 1981, p.72). Even stranger was this officer's concern about the possibility of blacks receiving preferential opportunity to attend magnet schools while he did not question the preferential opportunity to attend Boston Latin School and other 'examination' schools that was an actuality for whites. Policy contradictions like these caused black parents to believe that the court-ordered school desegregation student assignment plan had been implemented more for the benefit of whites than for blacks even though blacks were the plaintiffs in the class action suit and even though they won the case.

That the welfare of whites have been the first concern of leaders in the Boston School Department was revealed in further remarks by its chief desegregation officer. An additional reason why he opposed a cap on the proportion of blacks enrolled in a school (even if the absence of a cap might result in all-black resegregated buildings) is that 'whites from Dorchester and Hyde Park might also be at a disadvantage when they apply to magnet schools'. Their disadvantage, of course, would be due to the overflow of blacks from district schools more than 80 per cent black, who would be sent to other schools, including magnet schools (*Boston Globe*, 1985, p. 32). Magnet schools are popular with whites, especially whites of higher socioeconomic status, and school administrators apparently tried to make as many seats as possible available to these whites. Dianne Dumanoski of the *Phoenix* said that some white, middle-class parents in West Roxbury do use the Boston Public Schools selectively: 'Their children attend the public school kindergarten, the examination schools (like Boston Latin) and the Chapter 766 programs if they have special needs. Some families are still willing to use the public schools if their children are lucky in the assignment lottery and get places in a magnet school' (*Phoenix*, April 3, 1979, p. 6).

In March 1985, the Boston School Committee developed a more flexible proposal to give parents in certain parts of the city more choice in the assignment of their children to elementary schools. The new approach would allow parents to apply, in preferential order, to as many as five grammar schools in the district. The irony is that the experimental district embraced West Roxbury,

Roslindale, Hyde Park and parts of Dorchester (*Boston Globe*, 1985, p. 18). These communities, according to the 1980 census, were 98, 93, 86 and 67 per cent white, respectively.

The blacks who first proposed a modification in the student assignment plan in 1982 were concentrated in Mattapan, Roxbury and the South End, with populations that were 81, 78 and 41 per cent black. Since blacks were the first to propose a modification in the student assignment plan, it would seem appropriate to experiment with a more flexible plan in one or more districts that embraced a higher proportion of blacks. However, the School Committee decided to experiment with the more flexible plan in two communities where blacks were only 13 to 25 per cent of the total population and in two other communities in which they were 1 per cent or less of the total population. Such activity by official bodies in Boston again caused blacks to wonder who won the school desegregation case and whether the outcome was worth the effort.

Though the Experimental District attempted to give parents more choice, in actuality it merely perpetuated the status quo: students were still assigned to their geocoded schools; kindergarten classes were exempted from the plan; and black children were still mandatorily assigned into predominately black schools in white neighborhoods The only positive outcomes of the experiment were that it showed that there was a biracial constituency for increased educational choice, and it showed that whites would opt to enroll their children in non-magnet schools in black neighborhoods. (The most popular school for both whites and blacks in the Experimental District was the Joseph Lee School which is located in the center of Mattapan. The refusal of the Boston School Committee to assign white students into the Lee School in the early 1970s led to the filing of the original federal court case in 1973).

The next opportunity to modify the court-ordered assignment plan to increase parental choice came in November 1985 when Judge Garrity issued his final orders for disengagement. With its final orders, the court returned responsibility for making educational policy decisions and supervising the day-to-day operations of the Boston Public Schools to the thirteen members of the Boston School Committee and their newly appointed Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Laval Wilson, who also was the first black superintendent in the history of the Boston Public Schools. Though the final orders did not return 'full control over student assignments' to the school defendants, it did open the door for the development of a new assignment plan that was not based on geocodes and which increased parental and student choice. In his final orders, Judge Garrity clearly sought, 'to provide assignment guidelines for future years which are as flexible as consistency with a workable student desegregation plan permit'. He even provided the School Committee, The Mayor, The State Board of Education and the Plaintiffs with a framework for mediating any issues that emerged out of devel-

oping a new assignment plan, and he endorsed the Experimental District as a possible model for the whole system (see Memorandum Regarding Final Orders, Federal Supplement 214, 1 November 1985).

Parental and community pressure for a new choice plan quickly heated up following Judge Garrity's final orders, and in September 1986, Dr. Wilson convened a community task force to develop proposed modifications to the court-ordered assignment plan as part of his overall 'Boston Education Plan.' Many of the city's most activist parents, met for nearly a year and ultimately recommended the adoption of a 'Controlled Choice' plan that was somewhat similar to what had been pioneered in Cambridge, Massachusetts during the early 1980s (*Education Week*, 1 April 1987, p. 9). However, the Superintendent and officials from the system's court-ordered Department of Implementation made a number of changes in the proposal that were opposed by many of the black and white members of the Task Force. The Superintendent's plan would have superimposed the Experimental District's model of choice within the existing structure of the Court's eight community districts and five administrative areas. The plan also would have re-configured the system into a K-1, 2-5, 6-8, and 9-12 grade structure, thereby creating even more instability and discontinuity at the elementary level. Overall the plan lacked a coherent rationale and conceptualization for increasing educational choice and it lacked sufficient detail on many of the most important issues inherent in a choice plan. The Superintendent's recommendations were never operationalized or acted upon by the School Committee; in July 1987, the Committee voted to establish its own student assignment sub-committee and pledged to adopt a new plan by December 1988.

Meanwhile, the issue of the new assignment plan became even more salient in September 1987, when the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled that the system had achieved maximum practicable desegregation under the court-ordered mandatory student assignment plan, and that the Boston Public Schools were as 'desegregated as possible given the realities of modern urban life'. This ruling gave the city the legal privilege to develop its own student assignment plan, provided that a new plan did not discriminate against black and other plaintiff class students nor intentionally resegregate the Boston Public Schools.

However, despite this opportunity, the School Committee and the Superintendent continued politically and administratively to falter over the development of a new assignment plan throughout the 1987-1988 school year. External pressure again resurfaced, and in March 1988, a coalition of ten community organizations and parent groups including the NAACP and the Urban League formally petitioned the School Committee to act on a new choice plan by the end of the school year. At the same time a number of parents and community activist members of the Superintendent's Task Force began to increase their ef-

forts to get Mayor Raymond Flynn involved in the assignment controversy. The drive to get the mayor involved was spearheaded by the mayor's newly appointed Educational Advisor and in April 1988, the mayor agreed to hire outside consultants to help design a new assignment plan.

Though historically the mayor of Boston has had no formal authority over the policies of public schooling, the mayor nevertheless has had considerable power to indirectly influence educational reform by virtue of the fact that the is the City's most powerful elected official. However, few if any of Boston's mayors have ever ventured into the political minefield of the Boston Public Schools; and during the desegregation crisis, Flynn's predecessor (who narrowly defeated Louise Day Hicks in a mayoral election in 1968 with votes of blacks and white liberals) politically abandoned the Boston Public Schools during his fourteen years a mayor. As with many city mayors, the Boston Public Schools was seen as a political no-win situation.

Since the early 1980s, the relationship between the mayor and the public school had become more entwined by virtue of the fact that the mayor and the city council have final say over the system's operating budget. That the mayor and other elected officials should play a larger role in the City's schools is also justified in light of the fact that many of the social and economic problems undermining the quality of education in the Boston Public school are well beyond reach of the School Committee and its Superintendent of Schools. Moreover, holding the mayor and City Council responsible for the quality of public education may well be an essential ingredient in ensuring the institutionalization of educational reform in the Boston Public Schools.

In sum, during the 1980s the court-ordered assignment plan came under increasing criticism from a wide range of black and white Boston public school parents. The issue of changing the court's plan and giving parents more choice was initiated by the plaintiffs. The School Committee did not support changing the court's plan until it became convinced that the changes would also benefit whites. The major complaints most often voiced by parents about the court-ordered plan centered around its rigid use of 'geocodes' as the basic units of assignment and the limitations it placed on parents being able to choose the schools they really wanted their children to attend. Parents also complained that the assignment procedures were too complex and confusing, that the entire process lacked predictability, and that it actually worked in favor of those few parents who had the time, energy, and savvy to navigate the system's centralized bureaucracy and enroll their children in the system's citywide magnet schools. Despite this biracial constituency for change and an opportunity to develop a more flexible student assignment plan, the School Committee and the Superintendent of Schools failed to develop a new plan. The failure of these local school officials to initiate a new plan, created a leadership vacuum that was eventually

filled by the mayor.

The Introduction of 'Controlled Choice'

Our own involvement as educational consultants began in May 1988 when we were contracted separately by both the mayor's educational advisor and one of the co-chairpersons of the School Committee's Student Assignment Sub-Committee about the possibility of developing a 'Controlled Choice' Plan in the Boston Public Schools. The School Committee refused to hire outside experts, so we were retained by the mayor and met informally with parents and community leaders at City Hall in the office of the mayor's educational advisor. During this period, we held exploratory discussion around the possibility of developing a 'Controlled Choice" Plan with citizens and some School Committee members.

In late August 1988, the mayor officially asked us to assist the city in developing a fair and permanent student assignment plan for the Boston Public Schools. The only requests that the mayor made of us at the beginning and throughout the planning process were that we listen to and involve parents from all of the city's racial and ethnic groups in the planning process and that we make every effort to develop a plan that is racially fair and that could be implemented in the 1989-1990 school year. The mayor felt strongly that any new plan had to have the support of black, white, Hispanic, and Asian parents and that it had to be implemented immediately in order to galvanize the city's growing momentum for educational reform.

The mayor also agreed with our preconditions that the planning process had to be carried out with educational and professional integrity, and that, even though his office was paying for our services, we had to maintain political independence and work in collaboration with the School Committee, the superintendent and all other segments of the community. On 27 September 1988, the School Committee also agreed by a vote of 12-1 to respect both our planning principles and our criteria for developing a new student assignment plan.

Because of the complexities of the Boston Public Schools, we knew the plan would have to be comprehensive in scope yet practicable to implement. We also knew that because of the racial and political turmoil that occurred during the implementation of the court-ordered plan, the new plan had to be inherently fair to all racial and ethnic groups. And, because of the involvement of the federal court, we knew that the plan had to eliminate the social and educational effects of the system's past discriminatory practice and that it had to prohibit future discrimination.

The Planning Process

In attempting to develop a constitutionally permissible, administratively feasible, educationally sound, inherently fair, and to the extent possible, politically acceptable 'Controlled Choice' Plan for the Boston Public Schools, we were guided by a set of planning principles that were grounded in the beliefs that:

1. All children have a right to an instructionally effective, desegregated education;

2. No child should be educationally disenfranchised or disadvantaged because of where he or she lived in the city.

In our opinion, the planning process that we carried out during the months of October, November, and December was a truly collaborative effort and was as important as the plan itself. Though the time limitation truncated the process, we nevertheless listened with sympathetic ears to many people and synthesized their ideas and our own into what we believe to be a legally sufficient and workable 'Controlled Choice' Student Assignment Plan that supports excellence without compromising equity.

During this period, we served the Boston community as both desegregation experts and as educational planning consultants. The operating style of outside planners and the requirements of the planning enterprise always differ from one community to another. No two planning consultations are exactly alike, and individual planners are always viewed differently in different communities.

In helping to develop the new 'Controlled Choice' Plan we functioned primarily as brokers and, secondarily, as advocates. We accepted the responsibility of trying to bring disparate interests together on common ground wherever it could be found. In general, we discovered that there was more agreement than disagreement among concerned citizens in the community regarding both the new assignment plan and educational reform efforts in the Boston Public Schools. Therefore, we considered our broker role a primary responsibility.

Because the current situation in Boston is anchored in a federal school desegregation case, we accepted an advocacy role as one of our secondary responsibilities. We made it clear to all parties that any new student assignment plan adopted by the School Committee that might violate the court-determined rights of the plaintiff class was inappropriate.

Consequently, our function as advocates was to ensure that the constitutional requirement of a unitary, desegregated school system was a major test of the efficacy of our plan. We also insisted that particular attention had to be given to the educational interests of bilingual and special needs students and

children who are homeless. We explicitly stated that the most important equity test of the plan was the extent to which it works to benefit the most vulnerable and at-risk students in the school system.

Beyond our broker and advocacy roles, we tried to function as genuine consultants, not as decision-makers. We understood that the policy-making authority for public education ultimately is vested in the state education agency and is delegated by the state to the local education agency, the School Committee. Our consultation was for the purpose of advising local decision-makers, including the School Committee, the superintendent, the mayor, parents and other interest groups on the consequences of alternative actions and strategies based on what we knew about Boston, what we experienced in other communities, and what our own educational research and policy studies and those of others have revealed about the nature of a good urban school system.

We made every effort to conduct a public planning process and we shared our findings and working recommendations as they were being formulated with all parties and with the general public by participating in several community forums. As a result of this approach, we received valuable help in developing the plan from a wide range of sources. Many of our recommendations, as a result, were advanced by others and some recommendations were new formulations of our own.

We analyzed the structure of the Boston Public Schools and its existing court-ordered student assignment plan. In particular, with assistance from School Department planners, we conducted a detailed analysis of the system's eight community districts and its citywide magnet school district. On the basis of this joint analysis, we concluded that the court-ordered configuration of attendance areas in the Boston Public Schools were no longer feasible. The current districts were not equivalent in terms of racial and ethnic diversity, neighborhood cohesion, school facilities, and programmatic options. We also concluded that the system was overly centralized and that the current administrative makeup of the community districts was inherently flawed in that the system's five area superintendents were not members of the superintendent's administrative cabinet.

A draft of the new plan was made public on December 13, and on December 28 the plan was adopted by a vote of 10 to 1 with two of the four black members voting present. However, the School Committee also voted to have the superintendent develop recommendations on how the plan would be implemented and it agreed to take a final vote on the plan in mid-February. Instead of developing an operational plan for implementation, the superintendent in early February unveiled his own plan which included closing several high schools. This action created an unnecessary political crisis and delayed ratification of the final plan until late February. The superintendent's plan was rejected by the

School Committee and on 28 February 1989, the plan as proposed by the consultants was ratified by the School Committee with only a few minor modifications.

The New Boston 'Controlled Choice' Plan

On February 27, 1989 the Boston School Committee officially adopted a new student assignment plan that would maximize educational choice within the context of a racially unitary, decentralized, and enhanced system of public education, and that would achieve these goals simultaneously. The plan maximizes educational choice by virtue of the fact that no student will be mandatorily assigned to a Boston Public School on the basis of his or her residential geocode, and *all* parents will be given the opportunity of selecting the desegregating schools they deem most appropriate for their children by their own rank order of preference. These may be schools near their homes or other schools and programs that they are eligible to attend. Thus, as a result of the new assignment Plan, all of the system's 76 elementary, 21 middle, and 17 high schools will become desegregating schools of choice. (Under the court-ordered plan, only about 27 per cent of the system's students were enrolled in magnet schools of choice.) All available instructional space will be initially allocated on the basis of the actual percentage of white, black and other minority students who are eligible to enroll in the school. And, to further ensure that the system does not become resegregated, the final disposition of all new assignments for each school must vary no more than + or - 10 percentage points from the total proportion of white and minority students in a zone who are eligible to enroll in a school. These procedures govern all student assignment decisions and are the constitutional linchpins of the entire Plan.

The Plan reorganizes the system's elementary and middle schools into three geographic attendance zones in the North, West and East areas of the city, and it creates a separate citywide zone for high schools. These zones were created for purposes of assignment and to provide a more decentralized framework for educational planning and the day-to-day administration of the Boston Public Schools. According to the Plan these zones function as semi-autonomous but equivalent school systems, and they are a critical element in the educational reform mission.

When fully implemented, the Plan will govern all student assignment and reassignment decisions in the Boston Public Schools from kindergarten through grade 12. However, during the first year of implementation, the plan will only affect newly enrolling kindergarten students and students entering elementary and middle schools at grades 1 and 6 (about 9,000 students). All other elementary and middle school students will be grandfathered into their current schools

of enrollment and will not be eligible to participate in the 'Controlled Choice' Plan until the 1990-1991 school year.

Though the Plan was produced in a relatively short period of time, we nevertheless were able to involve virtually every political and educational constituency group in the planning process, including: the mayor, the School Committee, the Superintendent of Schools, representatives from the NAACP and Urban League, plaintiff's counsel, the Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts (BEAM), city and school department planners and central office bureaucrats, the Boston Teachers Union, City Councilors, principals and headmasters, business and community organizations, bilingual and special needs parents and their lawyers, the Citywide Parents Council and the Citywide Education Coalition, and a cross-section of parents representing all races, language groups, and geographic areas of the city.

However, despite our efforts to help Boston develop a true 'consensus' plan within its own administrative and political arena, the final vote of the School Committee split along racial lines with all nine white members voting in favor of the new assignment Plan, and the four black members voting against it. Although the black members claim that they did not vote in a bloc and that each one is in favor of increasing educational choice, the main thrust of their collective opposition to the plan was based on the argument that parents should not be asked to exercise choice until all the schools are of equal quality. They also argued that the only way to truly enhance and equalize educational quality in the Boston Public Schools is for the Mayor to substantially increase the system's overall operating budget and that up-front money be provided to schools in black neighborhoods. The issue of providing more funding for schools in black neighborhoods has also been advanced by attorneys representing the black plaintiffs on the grounds that white parents will not opt to enroll their children in these schools unless they are immediately magnetized. The plaintiffs' attorneys also alleged that the Plan could resegregate the system.

The Plan generated considerable distress within the system. The Plan was attacked by certain central office bureaucrats who feared that the Plan's decentralization component would erode their power and organizational status. The plan also was opposed by some black and white principals who feared that they would lose jobs because white students would not choose to enroll in their schools.

On the other hand, proponents of the Plan argue that more money is not going to make schools more attractive (the system now receives over $400 million for its 55,000 students) and that genuine educational improvement will only occur when parents are given more choice. They also contend that whites have and will continue to choose schools in black neighborhoods and that in fact the most popular schools in the city are located in the heart of the black commu-

nity. The Plan has been strongly endorsed by the Boston Teachers Union, the business community, the City Council, all of the City's major newspapers and television stations; and in a recent poll, over 80 per cent of the City's registered voters expressed strong support for the new Plan. The Federal Court, because of a complaint by attorneys for the plaintiffs, conducted a three-day hearing and approved the 'Controlled Choice' Plan for the Boston Public Schools on Wednesday, May 31, 1989.

The following section of this chapter gives a more detailed description of the essential features of the Boston 'Controlled Choice' Plan, and it describes some of the central issues that emerged in response to the Plan.

Zone Description

Student Attendance Zones

The first challenge that the new Plan had to address was the reconfiguration of the system's 900 geocodes and 42,000 elementary and middle school students into three equivalent and workable student attendance zones. In a city as large and complex as Boston, it simply was not practical to make all the elementary and middle schools citywide schools of choice. Therefore, it was decided early on that the zones should be geographically large enough to encompass heterogeneous populations but reasonable in size in terms of the length of time students would be transported to and from school. It was also agreed that where feasible, zones should link contiguous residential areas and that each zone should encompass an equivalent range of educational programs and services and have sufficient instructional space to accommodate all students residing in the zone. The issue of neighborhood cohesion was particularly important in the black community since the court had divided Roxbury, the city's oldest and largest black area, into five districts and Mattapan, its second largest and most middle-class black area into three districts. The Plan required that, for purposes of desegregation, the racial composition of students residing in each zone should be reflective of the city as a whole and that all racial, ethnic and socio-economic groups must have fair access to all schools in their zones. The following is a description of the zones that were ultimately adopted by the School Committee. (Willie and Alves, 1988).

The North Zone

The North Zone encompasses an area of about sixteen square miles. The zone spans the northern boundaries of the city and includes the neighborhoods

of Allston-Brighton, Mission Hill, Fenway, Back Bay, Chinatown, North End, South End, Beacon Hill, Charlestown and East Boston. The North Zone contains a number of unique transportation issues that had to be factored into the new Plan. The North Zone is the only zone that is separated by the downtown commercial and business centers of the city, and East Boston is physically isolated from the rest of the zone by the Boston Harbor – the primary means of access being the Harbor Tunnel. (East Boston was exempt from the court-ordered plan because of its physical isolation.) Charlestown is also isolated from other neighborhoods and is connected to the downtown area by a single bridge. Outside city limits, the North Zone borders the communities of Winthrop, Revere, Chelsea, Everett, Somerville, Cambridge, Watertown, Newton and Brookline.

As designed, the North Zone has a resident kindergarten through eight grade population of 13,188 students who are currently enrolled in the Boston Public Schools. Of these students, 25 per cent are white, 32 per cent are black, 43 per cent are other minority students. The North Zone has the largest number of Asian and Hispanic students and is the most racially diverse zone in the new Plan.

Parents and students who reside in the North Zone will be give a choice of 26 elementary schools and five middle schools, including three former elementary magnet schools: the Guild and McKay which are located in East Boston and the Jackson-Mann in Allston-Brighton.

The West Zone

The West Zone is approximately eighteen square miles in size and include the neighborhoods of Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, Roslindale, and West Roxbury. Beyond the city limits, the West Zone is bordered by the communities of Brookline, South Newton, Dedham and Milton. As designed, the West Zone has a resident kindergarten through eighth grade student population of 11,102; of these students, 24 per cent are white, 46 per cent are black, and 30 per cent are other minority. When compared to the K-8 system wide racial/ethnic proportions, the West Zone has a zero variance for whites, a -2 percentage points for blacks and +1 percentage point for other minorities. Overall, the West zone perfectly reflects the system wide proportion of white and minority students at the K-8 level.

Of these students, 8,459 are enrolled in regular education classes; 1, 593 are in bilingual education programs mostly Hispanic; and 1,050 are special needs student who are enrolled in substantially separate classes. Parents of school-age children residing in the West Zone will be given a choice of 27 elementary

schools and nine middle schools. The West zone schools have a capacity to enroll at least 15,000 students.

The East Zone

The East Zone is an elongated crescent-shape area of approximately fifteen square miles and includes the neighborhoods of South Boston, Dorchester, Mattapan and Hyde Park. Beyond the city limits, the East Zone borders the communities of Quincy and Milton. The East Zone has the largest resident student population of 16,834 at the K-8 level. Of these students, 23 percent are white, 61 per cent are black, and 16 per cent are other minorities.

The East Zone has a total school-age population of about 25,000 at the K-8 level. Parents and students residing in the East Zone will be given a choice of 28 elementary schools and eight middle schools. The East Zone has only one former citywide magnet school, the Lewenberg (the least of any zone). The elementary and middle schools located in the East Zone will have a capacity to enroll at least 20, 000 students under the new 'Controlled Choice' Plan.

The Geo-politics of Race, Choice, and Decentralization

The re-zoning process was carried out in close collaboration with city and school department planners, the Superintendent of Schools, the School Committee, the Mayor, and a cross-section of parents from all races and sections of the city. This phase of the planning process was completed by early October and produced a three-zone model that subdivided the system into three remarkably equivalent attendance zones in the North, East, and West areas of the city.

The zones were publicly unveiled by the Mayor, the Superintendent of schools and the President of the Boston School Committee on 22 October 1988 (see 'Flynn and Wilson united to praise school assignment plan', *Boston Herald,* 23 October 1988, p. 1). However, despite these endorsements, the proposed zones came under fire from a number of special interest groups and some black members of the school committee who claimed that their particular interests had not been accommodated by the City's new educational geography. The fact that no black school committee members were invited to the press conference unveiling the new map was a serious political mistake that reopened old racial wounds that should have been healed with the new Plan.

North Zone Issues

The only serious issue that emerged in response to the North Zone centered around the inclusion of East Boston in the new assignment Plan. The in-

clusion of East Boston in the Plan sparked immediate controversy when a reporter from the *Boston Globe* constructed a story claiming that the new Plan would bring 'forced busing' to East Boston (a most volatile term in light of the history of Boston school desegregation). The story triggered a political crisis for two white school committee members who lived in East Boston and for some of the mayor's political advisors. (The story also inspired Elvira 'Pixie' Palladino, former school committee member from East Boston and leader of ROAR, one of the City's most militant anti-busing organizations, to threaten to run again for the Boston School Committee.)

Under the court-ordered plan, the predominantly white neighborhood of East Boston was exempted from the mandatory desegregation process and was designated as a separate community school district. As a result of this decision, the only desegregation that actually took place in East Boston was through the voluntary assignment of minority students into several magnet schools that were located in East Boston.

In developing the new Plan, we found that at least 1,400 black students were voluntarily transported through the tunnel every day into these East Boston magnet schools, and that several hundred white students from East Boston were voluntarily enrolled in the system's magnet and examination schools in other parts of the city. We also discovered that the Southeast Asian and Hispanic students who lived in East Boston were being bused into other areas of the city for purposes of bilingual education, and that many of these linguistic minorities did not return to East Boston schools when they were mainstreamed. This demonstrated to us that despite its physical isolation and transportation headaches, students would travel into and out of East Boston if given a good educational reason to do so.

Before we began the planning process, we insisted that all areas of the city would be included in the new Plan and that no neighborhood or group would be given special treatment at the expense of others. We also made it clear that since no student was to be mandatorily assigned to a school on the basis of one's residential geocode, then no student could claim a property right to attend any particular public school; without such a property right, all the schools in any particular zone belonged to all the students who lived in the zone. Consequently, we had no basis upon which to exclude East Boston from the new 'Controlled Choice' Assignment Plan.

The only specific recommendation that was made in relation to East Boston was that the School Committee could continue to prohibit mandatory assignments into and out of East Boston schools on the grounds of transportation equity. In all other aspects of the Plan, East Boston schools were to be treated like any other schools in the zone and this includes conforming to the Plan's racial fairness guidelines. What this means is that even though East

Boston schools are now 70 per cent white and 30 per cent minority, under the new Plan only 25 per cent of all available space in East Boston schools will be allocated to whites and 75 per cent will be allocated minority students; these seats will be open to all white and minority students regardless of where they live in the zone. If these East Boston schools fail to meet their desegregation goals, then they will come under the scrutiny of the Plan's mandated school improvement mechanism and will be subject to possible closure like any other undersubscribed school in the system. Consequently, the Plan will provide a powerful incentive for principals, teachers and white parents in East Boston to make sure that all these schools attract and retain a large number of black, Hispanic and Asian students.

An important point to be understood about the Boston 'Controlled Choice' Plan is that it does not place the burden of desegregating an unattractive or instructionally unsound school on the backs of parents and students. Nor does the Plan provide any reward or incentive for principals and teachers to create a racist and discriminatory learning environment. If the system enforces this remedial requirement, then all the schools in East Boston and the rest of the City that deserve to remain open will be desegregated, and they will have done so by enhancing the quality of education for both white and minority students.

West Zone Issues

The West Zone became the focal point for two of the Plan's most controversial and seemingly irrational issues. One issue involved the inclusion of kindergarten in the new assignment Plan and the other involved the racial politics of including all of Mattapan in one attendance zone.

The Boston Public Schools have historically provided kindergarten to children who are four and five years old in what are called 'K1 and K2' classes respectively. These classes are mostly offered on a half-day basis and because they are exempt from court-ordered desegregation, these classes are made available to parents as neighborhood school assignment. Because the court did not require that kindergarten classes be desegregated, more than half of the white parents who live in Boston, and particularly those who now live in the West Zone, only use the public schools for kindergarten. Once these white K2 students are ready for first grade, some parents routinely enroll them in private and parochial schools in the city. We felt that this arrangement of providing neighborhood kindergarten classes for parents who had no intention of ever enrolling their children in the Boston Public Schools for an elementary education made absolutely no educational or fiscal sense.

We also found that because kindergarten was exempt from the court-

ordered desegregation plan, the vast majority of white and minority parents who did intend or who wanted to stay in the Boston Public Schools had to have their children reassigned to a different school for elementary education at first grade. This also made no sense to us in light of the fact that the parents who participated in the planning process made it clear to us that in addition to wanting more choice, they also want their children to be able to stay in the same elementary school from kindergarten through grade five. The parents of children who actually use the Boston Public Schools simply wanted more stability of assignment and continuity in their children's education. By not meeting this legitimate educational and social need, we publicly stated that Boston Public Schools was educationally and politically, 'shooting itself in the foot'.

Therefore, we recommended that all kindergarten classes come under the provisions of the new 'Controlled Choice' Plan and that the system provide more full-day and extended-day K2 in all three zones. This recommendation created political problems with certain white members of the School Committee and some of the Mayor's financial advisors. In the end, a shaky political and educational compromise was worked out whereby the Plan is to provide for both the continuation of the exempt kindergarten situation for private and parochial school students while also increasing the opportunity for kindergarten students to stay in their desegregated school of choice. We feel that this arrangement is contra-indicated and unnecessarily draws resources away from the children who actually use and need the Boston Public Schools.

The other issue that flared up was the splitting of Mattapan into two zones -- West and East. The original three-zone model was approved by the School Committee on 28 December 1988 by a vote of 10 to 1 with two black members voting present. The only black member of the Committee who voted against the Plan was from Mattapan. He voted against the Plan because it divided his electoral district into the East and West Zones, and because he claimed that the East Zone was educationally inferior to the other zones.

Actually, the zones were developed without regard to any Committee members' electoral districts, and though the Plan attempted to accommodate the concept of neighborhood cohesion, the geographic and demographic realities of the City made it impossible to keep certain neighborhoods entirely in the same zone. (In both the court-ordered plan and the final Plan, parts of Jamaica Plain, Dorchester, and Roxbury are in different zones and these discrepancies impact white, black, Hispanic and Asian students; also, in the original court-ordered plan, Mattapan was in three zones and Roxbury was in five zones.) Because of the City's segregative housing patterns, most Hispanics and Asians live in the areas encompassing the North Zone, while the vast majority of blacks are heavily concentrated in the central sections of the West and East Zones. Therefore, to avoid creating non-contiguous zones with long bus rides for black and other

minority students, all parties to the planning process agreed that in terms of minority students, the North Zone would contain an equivalent proportion of black, Hispanic, and Asian students and the West and East Zones would be majority black zones.

However, because nearly three-fourths of the City's black students lived in the densely-populated neighborhoods of Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan, it would be very difficult to place each of these areas entirely into one zone. With Roxbury being clearly located in the West Zone and black Dorchester clearly belonging in the East Zone, the Plan had to figure out the best way to address Mattapan overlapping both zones.

With respect to Mattapan, we drew the boundary between the East and West Zones along Blue Hill Avenue which is a major thoroughfare that divides Mattapan in a Southwesterly and Easterly direction. The planners felt that this made sense in light of the fact that Blue Hill Avenue was a natural boundary within Mattapan and that the students who lived in the Southwestern section of the neighborhood were geocoded into West schools under the court order and that many of the remaining students were already attending East Zone schools. (As noted earlier, the Court subdivided Mattapan into three community districts.) Consequently, by subdividing Mattapan in this fashion, the West Zone became 57 per cent black and the East Zone became 62 per cent black. This configuration also placed more middle income black families in both Zones and it ensured that the burden of transportation would not disproportionately fall on black students in either zone.

However, in face of mounting pressure and charges of racism from a number of black officials and community leaders, the map was changed to include all of Mattapan in the East Zone. Because this change made the East Zone 80 per cent black, the predominantly white neighborhood of Hyde Park was also moved from the West Zone into the East Zone. As a result of these changes, 4,000 more students were added to the East Zone, and while a few good schools were also brought into this zone, the net educational effect of this political compromise was simply to create more competition among blacks and Hispanics for scarce educational quality in the East Zone. The change also has created a potentially serious equity problem for black students in Roxbury who now must travel a greater distance in order to desegregate schools in the all-white areas of the West Zone. (One of the major priorities of black parents in Roxbury was to have their children finally attend schools nearer to their homes.) Moreover, while this change may have worked to accommodate the political interests of some black leaders, we fail to see how it will advance the educational interests of black schoolchildren. An interesting political footnote about the Mattapan issue is that, throughout this controversy, political leaders but few black parents from Mattapan expressed concern about being split into two zones.

East Zone Issues

As noted, the formation of the Boston 'Controlled Choice' Plan was based on the propositions that all students had a right to an instructionally effective desegregated education and that children should not be educationally disenfranchised because of where they happen to live in the City. This conception of the remedial obligation of an effective school desegregation plan was alien to the Boston Public Schools, and it became a central issue in the East Zone. More directly, the East Zone was perceived as being educationally inferior to the other zones. This perception was based primarily on the fact that the East zone had only one magnet school. In actuality, East Zone schools were no worse than the schools in the other zones. In fact, on the basis of basic skills tests, the East Zone had most of the system's better middle schools.

One of the major educational reforms initiated by the Court Order was the creation of twenty-two citywide magnet schools. The court had identified these schools as the 'crown jewels' of the Boston desegregation plan and for most parents these schools were perceived as being superior to the court's community district or geocoded schools. The fact that magnet schools were schools of choice and that they were paired with universities, cultural institutions and local businesses and over the years had received a disproportionate share of state and federal discretionary funding no doubt contributed to the perception that they were somehow better than the non-magnet schools.

However, despite receiving millions of dollars for magnet school development yearly from the State, Boston school officials never replicated these successful schools and programs, nor did they make any effort to ensure that resources were equitably distributed throughout the city among magnet and non-magnet schools. Like most desegregation plans, the primary purpose of Boston's magnet schools was to provide an attractive educational alternative for the white middle class. Evidently, because the community districts that comprised the East Zone had fewer white middle class families, it was given fewer magnet schools.

Because none of the schools in the proposed East Zone had benefited from these greater resources, educational equity demanded that this situation be addressed. The East Zone would be given a greater share of state Chapter 636 funding for desegregation assistance and a number of successful magnet programs located in the West and North Zone would be replicated in the East Zone. We also recommended East Zone students be given access to several magnet schools outside their zone until these programs were replicated in the East Zone.

Administrative Decentralization

Zone Superintendents

Another essential ingredient of the new Plan involved decentralizing the administrative and educational planning functions of the Boston Public Schools. Though Boston had five so-called 'Area Superintendents', they played only a minor role in the day-to-day life of the Boston Public Schools. Ironically, these positions have been historically filled by many of the most competent and innovative administrators in the system. Most were former principals and headmasters who had made their reputations turning around some of the most troubled schools in the system. Yet despite their demonstrated abilities as educational leaders once they became Area Superintendents they ceased to function as educational leaders.

Under the new Plan, each zone will have its own Zone Superintendent. Because of the educational implications of the new Plan, these positions should be filled by educational administrators who have demonstrated a capacity for innovative leadership. They will be appointed by the School Committee, and will be held responsible for the overall implementation of the new Student Assignment Plan within their respective zones. The scope of their duties will include:

1. Supervision of zone-based staff including administrators, principals, teachers, para-professionals, clerical staff and custodians;
2. Certification of instructional capacities;
3. Implementation of school improvement initiatives ;
4. Coordination of school programs with universities, businesses cultural institutions and other community organizations that are affiliated with the zone;
5. Administration of state, federal and other external funding re-sources;
6. Staff development and in-service training;
7. Supervision of zone Parent Information Centers.

Office of the Zone Superintendent

Each Zone Superintendent will also have a professional support staff that is capable of carrying out the duties and responsibilities of the office. Some of the positions that will be deployed to the office of the Zone Superintendent include: bilingual education specialists for programs being offered within the zone, special education specialists, staff developers, school improvement and curriculum

specialists and a transportation officer.

Parent Information and Student Assignment Centers

The most important organizational unit in the new zone offices will be the Parent Information and Student Assignment Centers. Each Parent Information Center will have a full-time director who will be responsible for the center's day-to-day operations. Ideally, this person will be the parent of a current or former Boston Public Schools student and should reside within the zone in which he or she works. The centers will also have a staff of full- and part-time parent coordinators and parental outreach workers who must be reflective of the racial and linguistic diversity of a zone's resident student population. Every effort must be made to hire staff who are knowledgeable about the workings of the Boston Public Schools.

These centers will have primary responsibility for ensuring that parents fully understand the rules and regulations of the new Student Assignment Plan and that all parents are able to make informed decisions about their schools and programs of choice. The centers will have particular responsibility for the preparation and dissemination of student registration and information packets, parental outreach and recruitment activities, coordination of school tours and parent visitations, the conducting of zonewide school informational meetings, and the initial processing of all student registration and school application forms.

Each center will have a full-time Student Assignment Officer who will be solely responsible for processing all final assignment applications. This person will be deployed from the court-ordered Department of Implementation and will be administratively supervised by the Zone Superintendent. However, the Department of Implementation will retain oversight authority over all final student assignments. Other center staff also will be supervised by the Zone Superintendent. Boston currently has five Parent Information Centers. These Centers employ about thirty-four parents and receive over $600,000 in state desegregation assistance. Under the new Plan, these Centers will be consolidated within the three zones.

Zone School Improvement and Planning Councils

Another key administrative innovation will be the creation of Zone School Improvement and Planning Councils. When a school system is decentralized into several student attendance zones, the system is obligated, for the sake of equity, to offer an equivalent range and quality of educational opportunities in

each zone. Educational equivalence is the Zone School Improvement and Planning Council's responsibility to oversee.

A Zone Council should consist of not more than thirteen individuals who are diversified in their racial and ethnic origins. These individuals should be residents or be affiliated with businesses and/or zone-based organizations. Council members will be appointed by the School Committee and will have a two-year, renewable term of office. Among the categories of individuals from whom council members should be recruited are parents of Boston Public School students, local educators, business and other community representatives (such as those associated with the plain-educationally-oriented organizations). At least one-third of the members of the councils should be parents.

Councils should be led by co-chairs, one of whom should be a parent and another an educator. Initially, co-chairs should be appointed by the School Committee and Superintendent of Schools for a two-year term of office but, thereafter, should be elected by the Council from its membership.

The Zone Superintendent should serve as executive secretary of the Zone School Improvement and Planning Council and his or her office should provide staff support for the council's work.

The councils do not have the authority of the School Committee. Because they are creatures of the School Committee, they should serve as recommending agents regarding schoolwide policies and practices that affect a zone and should report directly to the School Committee and the Superintendent of Schools who, from time to time, may assign specific decision-making powers to the councils.

A council should fulfill its mission of monitoring the extent to which educational opportunities in its zone are equivalent to those in others by functioning in the following ways:

1. Identify successful school improvement initiatives elsewhere that should be part of the educational offerings of a zone;
2. Determine instructional space available and appropriate use of facilities for educational programs in consultation with Zone Superintendents and school building administrators in the zone;
3. Monitor implementation of the *Unified Facilities Plan* and recommend modifications for future implementation;
4. Review and approve individual school improvement plans and individual school profiles;
5. Dispense discretionary state and federal funding to programs within the zone that have been appropriated by the School Committee;
6. Monitor implementation of the 'Controlled Choice' Student Assignment Plan and recommend modifications when appropriate;

7. Prepare for the School Committee and the Superintendent an annual report on the status of education in zone schools which should include recommendations for stabilizing and maintaining enhanced educational programs, developing new ones when necessary and phasing out those that are ineffective, and an operating budget for all zone schools and administrative services.

School-Based Initiatives

Because 'Controlled Choice' places a responsibility upon each school to make itself attractive to students, educational planning and decision-making must also be decentralized to the school building level. The Plan requires that principals, headmasters, teachers, parents and even students work together to fashion an educational mission and learning environment that will enhance their schools. Each cycle of the choice process is, in effect, a referendum on the schools within a zone. A school's standing in the annual rank-ordering of schools that students prefer should send a clear message to educators at the building level.

Because the Boson Public Schools have been slow to multiply and replicate their own success stories due, in large part, to a highly centralized bureaucratic decision-making structure, and because the court-ordered plan mandatorily assigned students to schools regardless of whether the school was instructionally effective, the system must now, with 'Controlled Choice', shift to each school building the authority and initiative for proposing innovations that will make a particular school special and attractive. In support of this effort, the School Committee is currently finalizing the elements of a "school-based management" initiative that will be implemented.

School Selection and Assignment Process

Administrative Provisions

Early and timely assignment process

Under the proposed 'Controlled Choice' Student Assignment Plan, the school selection and assignment process will operate on an early and continuous basis. The entire process will begin earlier in the school year, and there will be separate starting dates for processing various kinds of assignments that are routinely made in the Boston Public Schools. This will give parents *more* time to visit schools and make informed school choices, and it will give the system more time to provide effective parent information services. Moreover, this early as-

signment procedure will make the entire student assignment process more manageable and will enable students to obtain their actual assignments long before they begin the next school year. (This latter point is particularly important in terms of the system attracting students away from private and parochial schools.) Under the court's plan, all assignments were made at the same time with most parents not getting their assignments until August.

Kinds of assignments

As a comprehensive and permanent method of assignment, this 'Controlled Choice' policy will govern all student assignment and reassignment decisions in the Boston Public Schools including; newly enrolling K1 and K2 student; K2 students rising into first grade; fifth graders rising into sixth grade (elementary to middle school); eighth graders rising into ninth grade (middle to high school); voluntary transfers; changes of residence; students clearing the waiting lists for first choice schools; bilingual and special needs students mainstreaming into regular classes; newly-enrolling students grades 2-12; and children who are homeless.

Because all of the above students will be seeking a "new" school assignment and involve a *distinct* population of minority and white students, the system will establish a separate timeline for processing each kind of assignment. As noted, this will enable the system to better manage the assignment process, and it will enable each Parent Information Center to better respond to the particular educational needs and circumstances of those students and parents seeking a new school assignment.

Another major advantage of the Boston 'Controlled Choice' Plan is that it will provide students with more stability of assignment regardless of where they live in the city. More directly, by eliminating geocodes and allowing students to enroll in school within relatively large residential attendance zones, where a student happens to live will have less of an effect on where one goes to school. Students who change their permanent residence and remain within their original attendance zone will *not* be required to attend a difference school. Also, those students who do not have a permanent residence and who have been declared "homeless" by a governmental or voluntary social service agency may enroll in schools in any of the three zones. When and if a homeless child acquires a permanent residence in the city, the child will be required to select a permanent school of assignment under the provisions of the 'Controlled Choice' Plan.

Determination of instructional capacities

Prior to the beginning of the school selection and assignment process, Zone Superintendents must certify instructional capacities for each elementary and middle school in their respective zones. An instructional capacity must be set for each school and for each grade level within each school. The instructional capacity will represent a school's assignment capacity for the following school year.

The total assignment capacity for elementary and middle schools must be sufficient to accommodate all K-8 students residing within each attendance zone including regular education, bilingual and special needs students. The determination of school-specific instructional capacities should be established in consultation with Zone School Improvement and Planning Councils and school building principals. These decisions have been made in the past by the Department of Implementation and are a crucial part of the new assignment Plan.

Identification of available instructional space

After instructional or assignment capacities have been established for each elementary and middle school, the zone Superintendent will certify all available instructional space by school and grade level (total instructional space - grandfathered or continuing students). This information will be disseminated to parents through the system's Parent Information Centers prior to and during the school selection process. The identification of available space will be carries out in collaboration with the zone Student Assignment Officer and school building principals. Under the Court's plan parents were never given information about available space.

Allocation of available space at grade level

All available space will be initially allocated to white, black and other minority students as designated by the court before the beginning of the school selection and assignment process. At a certain time, if all allocated seats have not been claimed by blacks or other minorities, the remaining seats may be reassigned to the majority group that has oversubscribed its allocated seats. The initial allocation of available instructional space should be based on the actual proportions of white, black and other minority students who are eligible to enroll in the school. This procedure will ensure that each racial group will have genuine proportional access to all school and programs of choice.

Although seats in schools initially are allocated for three racial and ethnic

groups, all final assignments for blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans will be made in terms of a two-way definition of desegregation. (Boston is now required by the court to maintain a three-way racial balance for whites, blacks and other minorities.) This procedure will protect the rights of the plaintiff class to a desegregated education and will also work to increase the accommodation of first- and second-choice schools for black, Hispanic, Asian and Native American students, and, at the same time, minimize travel to and from schools. The actual enrollment in each school must fall within + or - 10 percentage points of the percent of white, black and minority students in each zone.

This procedure will also enable more minority students to attend schools closer to their homes and will facilitate greater mainstreaming of bilingual and minority special education students into the school in which they have been receiving their special programmatic services. The determination and allocation of all instructional school space must also be made in accordance with the system's prevailing standards for optimum class size for regular, bilingual and special education students.

Accommodation of Choice

School Choice

All students requiring or seeking a new school assignment must make their applications through the appropriate Parent Information and Student Assignment Center. At the time of application, parents and students will be allowed to select as many schools as are available by their own rank-order of preference. While it is highly unlikely that parents will actually visit every school in the zone, parents should be encouraged to visit and select at least five elementary schools and four middle schools. These may be schools near their homes or other schools and programs that they are eligible to attend.

While every effort should be made to assign students to their first-choice schools, no students will be guaranteed a first-choice school, and all final assignment decisions must be made in accordance with the Plan's administrative and desegregation-related provisions.

Oversubscription

Under the Plan's *Racial Fairness Guideline,* all instructional space will be initially allocated in zone schools on the basis of the percentage of white, black and other minority students residing in the zone. This will ensure that each racial group identified in the court-ordered desegregation plan will be guaranteed genuine proportional access in each zone school. In the likely event that

more students apply for spaces initially allocated for white, black and other minority students, the protocol for assignments will be as follows:

1. Siblings If the applicant already has a brother or sister enrolled in the school, he or she will be given a preference over other applicants;
2. Closest to School Applicants who live within the geographic walk-zone of the school may be enrolled before students who live outside of the walk-zone. For purposes of this Plan, an elementary school walk-zone is defined as an area within one mile of the school and within one and one-half miles of a middle school. No more than 50 percent of available instructional spaces should be, initially, filled by walk-zone students. All should be allowed to exercise a walk-zone preference for the school nearest to their home;
3. Random Lottery The remaining spaces should be filled by a random lottery of the applicants not yet assigned;
4. Waiting Lists Students who are not assigned to their first- and/or second-choice schools should be placed on a waiting list for these schools of choice. Waiting lists will be maintained for white, black and other minority applicants. Waiting lists should be periodically cleared in accordance with the administrative and Racial Fairness Guidelines of the New 'Controlled Choice' Student Assignment Plan.

An important point to be understood is that all assignments and reassignments must conform to the Plan's racial fairness guidelines.

Undersubscription

Any seats initially allocated for black or other minority students in a school that are not claimed by a certain time as specified in the new Plan, will be redistributed to majority group students who have actually applied to the school. Also, in the event that fewer students apply for space initially allocated for white and minority students, the Student Assignment Unit will be permitted to fill these available instructional spaces within the limits of the Plan's racial fairness guidelines.

The following procedures will be used for filling underutilized school space:

1. *Clearing Waiting Lists* Undersubscribed spaces initially allocated for white, black and other minority students may be filled by students on a waiting list for their first- and second-choice school within the limits established by the Plan's racial fairness guidelines;
2. *Mandatory Assignments* Students who cannot be assigned to an explicit school of choice may be given a fixed assignment to a school near their homes in accordance with the Plan's racial fairness guidelines. In light of the

unique transportation circumstances in the North Zone, the School Committee should consider prohibiting fixed assignments either into and out of East Boston and other impacted areas in the North Zone;

3. *Voluntary Transfers* Undersubscribed spaces may be filled by students requesting a voluntary transfer out of their assigned schools. Voluntary transfers will only be permitted during the first and second marking periods and must conform to the Plan's racial fairness guidelines;
4. *Hardship Appeals* Parents who are dissatisfied with their child's assignment may file an appeal under the provisions of a hardship appeals procedure. Students who prevail in their appeal may be assigned to undersubscribed schools in accordance with the Plan's racial fairness guidelines. This function will be carried out by the Department of Implementation.

Underutilized Schools and School Improvement

A critical issue addressed by the new Plan is how to handle the schools that parents do not choose. Under the new Plan, schools that have excess instructional space and/or otherwise are having difficulty in attracting and retaining students as indicated by low student applications, and schools that have disproportionate fixed assignments and/or disproportionate requests for transfers into other schools, should be targeted for immediate technical assistance and special school improvement initiatives.

Year One Requirements

The question of how to make underutilized schools more attractive will initially be the responsibility for the principal or headmaster, teachers and School Improvement Council. Possible intervention after one year of undersubscription may include:

1. The Parent Information Center would conduct a survey of parents and students who are requesting a transfer in order to identify their reasons for wanting to leave the school. Also, the Parent Information Center would attempt to ascertain the reasons for parents not initially selecting the school.
2. The Parent Information Center would share the results of its inquiry with school officials and develop a specific parental out-reach and recruitment plan for the underutilized school. Concurrently, the school would re-evaluate its educational program and make specific changes if necessary to make the school more attractive.

Year Two Requirements

If a school continues to be undersubscribed after the second year of implementation, the school should come under the scrutiny of the Zone Superintendent. Possible interventions may include:

1. The zone school improvement specialists would conduct an assessment of the school's educational attractiveness using such criteria as school facility, teaching and learning environment, curriculum, special program offerings, parental involvement activities, external resources and other factors that may be making the school unattractive;
2. On the basis of the above study, the Zone Superintendent may make specific school improvement recommendations to be implemented by the principal or headmaster. The Zone Superintendent and zone planning council may also allocate specific resources and support staff to facilitate the implementation of this school improvement plan;
3. The Zone Superintendent should also conduct a review of the school's educational leadership and make appropriate recommendations for possible changes to the Superintendent of Schools.

Year Three Requirements

After three years, if a school is still undersubscribed, the Zone Superintendent and Zone School Improvement and Planning Council may take whatever measures necessary to make the school more attractive, including changing the educational leader of the school and major restructuring of the school's educational mission. The measures may also involve the consolidation or closure of the underutilized school.

Under the court-ordered plan, there was no requirement or incentive for schools to become educationally attractive. Though the above mandated school improvement provision has made some principals and headmasters fear for their jobs, this mechanism, if implemented correctly, will finally give remedial attention to the schools that are in need of help.

What We Learned

First, we have learned that *school desegregation planning is a political as well as an education process.* Communication and information are essential in any political process. Because of this, we insisted that our planning be public so that no one need be fearful that secret deals would be made that could be harmful to minority or majority populations. We held numerous small group meetings with a wide range of groups – those representing political, economic, racial and

ethnic groups of the city and local communities. We also met with School Committee members, City Councilors, the School Superintendent, the mayor and attorneys who represented the various parties in the case on a number of occasions.

These consultations were for the purpose of discovering specific ideas for the Plan that various leaders sought for their constituencies, discovering contradictory preferences, if any, and seeking areas of common ground for compromise. In meeting with one constituent group, we often shared ideas that we had received from another group without identifying the source so that all parties would be aware of the attitudes and preferences of others and the need to compromise.

To honor the political process in planning, we discovered that external agents such as the consultants could provide a unique function as community mediators between and among disparate groups with contradictory or conflicting preferences. To perform this functions, we insisted on labeling ourselves as community consultants although the mayor had retained our services. Any group that wanted to speak with us could have access to us, publicly and privately.

The mediating and conciliatory function was partially effective in Boston but was truncated and prevented from having its full effect when the consultation sessions were prematurely suspended when the timetable for completing the draft plan was speeded up. In the end, we must conclude that the requirement to suspend the community consultation process to meet and end-of-year (1988) goal was harmful.

A plan has a better chance of being accepted if it can be presented not as a plan by consultants or by any of the parties but as a community consensus plan. The Plan we presented was partially a community-consensus plan. Some opposition that developed was precisely because the consultation process was abbreviated. In identifying school desegregation planning as a political process, we do not suggest that the need for technical expertise is unnecessary. Indeed, we resisted any suggestions that the Plan should be a conglomeration of the disparate opinions of the parties. To give direction to those who shared with us their ideas and opinions on school desegregation, we prepared a memorandum of planning principles which was officially submitted to the Boston School Committee for its adoption. This memorandum dealt with the three-fold goal of our planning operation -- enhanced education, guaranteed desegregation and increased choice of schools for matriculation. The ultimate design of our Plan is that it attempts to achieve these three goals simultaneously as opposed to other desegregation plans that approach these goals singly. The simultaneous achievement of these goals requires an expertise that transcends lay opinion.

Several year ago when some whites in Boston objected to school desegrega-

tion and believed that they did not have to abide by a United States District Court order if they did not wish to honor it, the community was presented with the public acting-out of *narcissistic entitlement*. This phrase denotes the behavior of dominant people of power who are smug, self-satisfied and self-centered, according to Robert Coles (1977, p.364).

When Boston community leaders were asked a few years after the court order, 'What contributed most to disruptions in the community associated with school desegregation?' a majority referred to 'negative community attitudes'. A Declaration of Clarification was issued by some state and local legislative leaders during the early days of school desegregation in Boston which was an analysis of why resistance to busing was justified. The justification was nothing more than the expression of 'narcissistic entitlements'.

Clearly, such a feeling was delusional, especially in a democratic republic under the rule of law. By failing to be firm and fair in a way that might keep such feelings from getting out of hand, city officials permitted people who had these feelings to almost wreck and sabotage the court-ordered desegregation plan. Whites with entitlement feelings believed that they did not have to do what they did not want to do, even if their behavior was illegal.

We have witnessed a feeling among some blacks in Boston in response to our contemporary 'Controlled Choice' Plan for school desegregation that also is delusional and that also will wreck the Plan and its implementation if left unchecked. Among some blacks, there is a feeling of fear that may be characterized as *self-preservation anxiety*. It is manifested through a separatist ideology and belief in one's own unworthiness. Those who suffer from *self-preservation anxiety* have a low self-concept of themselves and of others who are familiar. They believe that, given the opportunity, whites or other dominant people of power will always avoid associating with blacks and other subdominants.

Thus, people with such feelings automatically oppose any arrangement that might threaten their sanctuary. 'Controlled Choice' eliminates geocodes and mandatory student assignments and encourages all schools to compete for students by making themselves attractive. This arrangement is threatening to some black school administrators and professionals of low self-esteem. They believe that others will avoid them and the schools and learning environments over which they preside if they are free to do so. Some black educators and staff who suffer from self-preservation anxiety have, therefore, vigorously opposed the 'Controlled Choice' Student Assignment Plan.

Again, not enough attention in the planning process was given to counteracting these delusional feelings through reassurance. Thus, *self-preservation anxiety* could wreck the contemporary 'Controlled Choice' school desegregation Plan as *narcissistic entitlement* almost wrecked the court-ordered mandatory stu-

dent assignment school desegregation plans in the past. We have learned from our planning experience in Boston that school desegregation must deal with both rational concerns and irrational fears. Too often community planners limit their proposals to that which is rational when the irrational is that which may derail their plans.

Our second learning is implicated in our first learning. The political process links together many different social units in society because none is self-sufficient. Thus, our second learning from the Boston experience is that school desegregation is a community organization process, one that requires both horizontal and vertical linkages to be effective.

Not only should there be linkages between the political and education system because of the method of financing public education, the school system must establish horizontal links with other community institutions as, for example, the economic and kinship (or family) systems.

Our experience derived from consultations in other communities is that the educational planning process is enhanced when local governmental leaders do not dominate educational planning. To do so might jeopardize schooling and subjugate its mission to the doctrine and ideology of other institutional systems. Yet educational institutions should cooperate with governmental and other authorities as a relatively autonomous system.

The absence of inter-institutional cooperation between government and public education largely has been due to the tendency of political leaders to avoid involvement in educational issues. Political leaders have tendered to withdraw so far that educational leaders often feel left alone. Up to the present, political leaders have related to public education largely through their veto action. Not being educators, the political leaders have told the public schools what they cannot do largely by controlling the purse strings.

In Boston, there is a new development. The mayor has become deeply involved in education. By retaining consultants to help design a new student assignment plan, the mayor is contributing to a process of prescribing what the schools should do. Because few mayors have waded into the troubled waters of urban education, there are few guidelines regarding how political and educational leaders can gracefully embrace each other as co-planners in the community. Thus, some Boston School Committee members have accused the mayor of meddling and the mayor has accused the School Committee of inaction. The Superintendent has been critical of the mayor, and the mayor has been critical of the Superintendent.

Despite these accusations, our assessment is that the educational planning process has moved ahead with dispatch, purpose and energy because of the direct involvement of the Mayor. While the mutual involvement of governmental and educational leaders has not been free of conflict, it has contributed to greater

progress. We advocate more, rather than less, involvement of local political leaders in local educational affairs but remind political leaders, in particular, of their need to exercise restraint so that the education goals of public schools are not jeopardized. In due time, we predict that educational and political leaders will learn how to work effectively with each other. Public education, obviously, needs governmental support to fulfill its goals.

Public education also needs the support and assistance of families to achieve its ultimate goal. The 'Controlled Choice' approach to student assignments empowers the family and gives it a fundamental role in educational decision-making. It is the kind of role that eventually will enhance education because governmental funds may be targeted to those schools which parents and students, in their rank-ordered selections, indicate are least attractive.

Schools that reach out to parents in the choice cycle may also learn how to reach out to them for other purposes. Our experience reveals that the school is a more helpful learning environment when it welcomes parents through its doors while school is in session. The Parent Information Centers proposed in our Boston Plan are essential outreach arms of the public system. They enable parents to be more secure in their contacts with the schools. Such parents may eventually become the greatest advocates for schools.

Our experience has been that schools gain power through the number of allies they can attract. An institution, like a school, which is in communion with a number of other community institutions, is stronger than one that stands alone or is dominated by only one other agency. The strength of an organization is a function of the coalitions and alliances it forms with other organizations in the community because these are ways of sharing responsibilities and risks.

In addition to horizontal linkages, community institutions like the schools should cultivate vertical linkages. The Commissioner of Education of the State of Massachusetts endorsed the new 'Controlled Choice' Student Assignment Plan for the City of Boston even before the School Committee acted. This should have been a sign to the Boston School Committee that other support in the governmental hierarchy might be available if it completed the approval process in a timely fashion. Unfortunately, the Boston School Committee almost ignored this vertical linkage that stood in waiting. Perhaps the School Committee forgot about cultivation of the State because it was preoccupied and locked in conflict with the Mayor.

Regardless of how horizontal relations are resolved, local agencies also need supportive vertical relations. In many localities, state government abandons local educational agencies. In Massachusetts, the state has extended a helping hand that the local educational agency has been slow to grasp. Nevertheless, the state and federal governments are essential partners for local governmental agencies.

Sometimes they strengthen local educational agencies to withstand the imperialistic actions of other horizontal partners who have not learned the value of limiting their influence, particularly in the educational arena.

We have learned these principles about school desegregation planning on the basis of our long-term association with Boston.

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Appendix 2

Evaluation of the Boston Controlled Choice Student Assignment Plan: A Reanalysis and Interpretation of the Bain and Company Study

Introduction

The Boston school desegregation experience has been writ large in books, articles and newspapers of this nation. J. Anthony Lukas chronicled the trials and tribulations of desegregation in a best-selling book entitled *Common Ground* (1985). David Halberstan called it a bittersweet book on the end of an American dream. Robert Dentler and Marvin Scott, court experts who prepared an inside account of the Boston Desegregation case called *Schools on Trial* (1981), said "Boston's notorious school desegregation conflict was regarded as the type that no one in his right mind would want to take place in his city. 'Don't let this become another Boston' was the slogan that spread from New York City to Los Angeles" (Dentler and Scott 1981:x).

Actually, the Boston school desegregation plan ordered by the U.S. District Court in 1975 had some "educationally beneficial and even novel" components, according to education planners, Dentler and Scott; they also state that the implementation of the plan was "overwhelmingly peaceful and successful" but that few heard of these aspects of the plan because "no one was listening" (Dentler and Scott 1981:x).

After thirteen years of court-ordered and court-monitored school desegregation, the U.S. District Court gave Boston the privilege of developing a new student assignment plan. However, the Court explicitly stated that the new plan would not be acceptable if it resegregated the Boston Public Schools.

In 1988, the Mayor of Boston retained two education planners, Charles V. Willie and Michael Alves, to develop a new student assignment plan that would give parents and their children greater choice, maintain racial fairness and improve the quality of education for all students. The outcome of this effort was the *Boston Controlled Choice Student Assignment Plan* (Alves and Willie, 1990). The Mayor said the plan was an "unprecedented collaborative process in which hundreds of parents, advocates and educators...had significant and ongoing input" (Flynn Dec. 13, 1988:1).

Alves and Willie called controlled choice "a holistic desegregation technique...particularly well-suited to big city school districts which have used a variety of techniques but have been unable to fully desegregate all...schools" (Alves and Willie 1990:22). One reason for the effectiveness of controlled choice is that it achieves several outcomes simultaneously. For example, it advances the school system while enhancing individuals, is grounded in equity and fairness and promotes school improvement while guaranteeing student body diversity and offering choice.

Before the Controlled Choice plan was implemented in Boston, the Massachusetts State Education Department and the U.S. District Court reviewed it. The State Commissioner of Education and the U.S. District Judge were satisfied that the plan, if properly implemented, would not resegregate the Boston Public Schools. Thus, May 31, 1990, the Court released Boston from continuous monitoring but in it's "Final Judgment" (*Morgan v. Burke*, 1990) permanently enjoined the school system from discriminating on the basis of race in the operation of the public schools of the city of Boston and from creating, promoting or maintaining racial segregation in any school or other facility in the Boston public school system (Final Judgment *Morgan v. Burke* 1990:4). This enjoinment was one of the standards that the Boston controlled choice plan had to meet.

In 1992, the developers of the Boston Controlled Choice Student Assignment Plan were retained by the Boston School Committee to "fine tune" the plan that was adopted in 1989. Since the fine tuning, annual reports issued by the developers of the plan reveal that 90 percent of the students who select schools in January for the next school year receive their first or second choice and that 90 percent of the students who prefer attending a school near home (in the one-mile walk zone radius) are accommodated. Moreover, the outcomes mentioned are experienced by all racial groups. Less than 10 percent of the students in grades one, six, and nine (the entering grades for elementary, middle and high school) are administratively assigned to a school that they did not choose. (The "examination schools" — The Boston Latin School, the Boston Latin Academy and the John O'Bryan Technical High Schools —are not included in the controlled choice student assignment plan).

Despite these beneficial outcomes in student assignments that were experienced by all students in an equitable way, some politicians and educators continue to advocate neighborhood schools in Boston. Historically, neighborhoods in Boston have been more or less segregated communities consisting of concentrations of people in specific racial and ethnic populations. A return to neighborhood schools in Boston would result in a return to segregated education that the Court prohibited.

Annual reports on the controlled choice plan indicated that the choice process permitted students to enroll in schools outside their neighborhood. Stu-

dents tend to enroll in such schools if they are perceived to be more compatible with their interests and educational needs. Since the 1992 fine tuning of the plan, each year a decreasing proportion of students have chosen neighborhood schools. Today, a majority of students in Boston attend schools outside their neighborhood.

In 1994, City Councilor Peggy Davis-Mullen and Boston University Professor Christine Rossell "released a controversial school assignment proposal that would favor neighborhood schools" (*Boston Globe* 1994:16). The City Councilor also called for "a statistically significant fastidiously designed attitude survey of Boston's parents about neighborhood schools, controlled choice and educational quality" (*Boston Globe* 1994:16). According to the *Boston Globe* "an independent study could reveal much" (*Boston Globe* 1994:16), but it should be conducted by someone other than Professor Rossell whose "academic antipathy toward the current [architects of the system's controlled choice plan]...may be motivating [her] as much as intellectual curiosity"(*Boston Globe* 1994:16).

At the request of the Mayor's Office and the Boston Private Industry Council, a study of the student assignment process was conducted between June and December 1995 by Bain and Company, a consulting firm (*Boston Globe* 1995:40). A reanalysis of the Bain and Company study and an interpretation of the data are presented in this report.

Data and Method

The survey method was used. Five hundred and five families with children entering kindergarten, first grade, sixth grade and ninth grade (the grades for which the student assignment plan was designed) were randomly selected for interviews. Interviews were conducted by telephone in English and Spanish and averaged thirty minutes. All interviews were conducted by Bain and Company representatives. According to the study report, "survey participants represented all racial groups and all Boston neighborhoods" (Bain and Company 1995:3-6).

The report does not indicate the exact number of Whites, Blacks, Latinos, Asians and members of other racial and ethnic groups interviewed. However, a graph reveals that approximately 49 percent of the families interviewed are African American, 27 percent White, and 24 percent Latino, Asian and members of other racial groups (Bain and Company 1995:4). The citywide student body in kindergarten 2, and grades 1, 6, and 9 is 49 percent African American, 18 percent White and 32 percent Latino, Asian and others. The sample studied by the Bain Company, therefore, appears to have an overrepresentation of Whites by 9 percentage points and an underrepresentation of the combined populations of Latinos, Asians and people of other racial groups (excluding Blacks) by 8 percentage points compared to the citywide public school population at

these grade levels (Office of Planning Research and Development 1994:1). The proportion of Blacks or African Americans in the sample (49 percent) is the same as their proportion in the citywide student body for the four grades included in this study.

Findings

The major questions for which answers were sought in the Bain and Company survey were these: (1) Are parents pleased with the controlled choice student assignment plan? (2) Would parents prefer an automatic or mandatory assignment for their child to a neighborhood school rather than having the privilege of choosing schools? (3) Are parents and their children satisfied with the schools that they chose? (4) Why are parents and their children satisfied with the schools they chose?

Table 1 of the Bain and Company study shows that more than 80 percent of the parents are satisfied with the current assignment process. This finding is the opposite of that stated by political scientists Christine Rossell in a report to the U.S. District Court in Illinois. In that report she said, "most parents want neighborhood schools" (Rossell 1995:26).

Table 2 of the Bain and Company study indicates that a majority of all parents are satisfied with the controlled choice student assignment process, even if they did not receive their first-choice schools. Indeed, two-thirds or more of the parents surveyed which children who did not get their first- or second-choice school said that they were satisfied with the student assignment process. When asked about their preference for the controlled choice method of student assignment versus automatic assignment to a neighborhood school, 72 percent of the households interviewed preferred controlled choice and the options it offers (Bain and Company 1995:3).

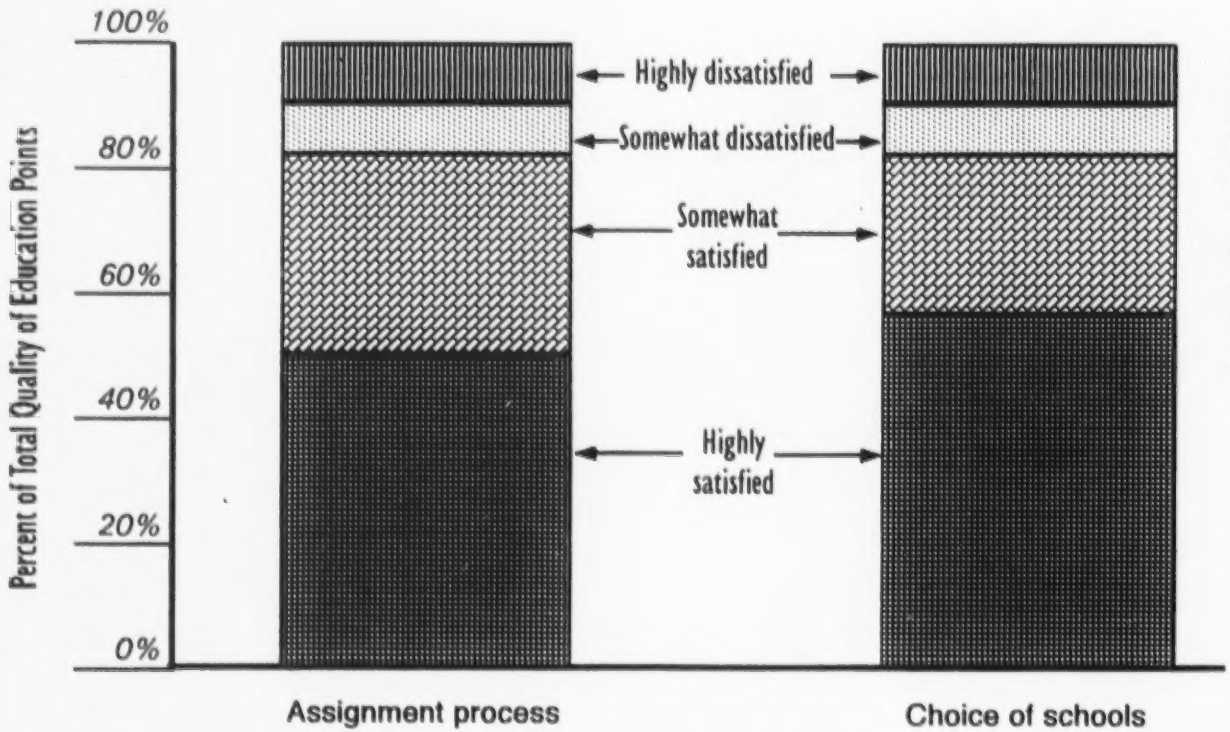
While parents in Boston were overwhelmingly satisfied with the controlled choice student assignment process, their level of satisfaction with schools to which they were assigned dropped substantially if they did not get their first or second choice. The proportion of dissatisfied patrons of the public school system exceed 40 percent for individuals who did not receive their prime choices. However, it should be pointed out that among the disappointed patrons, 50 percent still were satisfied with their school of choice, although not highly satisfied. Apparently, the process of choosing a school is a satisfying experience in itself, even if one odes not get exactly what one wants.

These findings should be pleasing to a school system that has struggled as long and as hard as Boston has struggled to turn around the reputation of its public schools. However, the fact that approximately one-fifth of the patrons are dissatisfied with both the student assignment process and the schools avail-

TABLE 1

Boston Public Schools: Parent Survey

Satisfaction with Assignment Process and School Choices



More than 80% of parents are satisfied with the current assignment process and choice of schools.

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n=495 *Source: Parent Survey, October 1995*

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able for choice is a fact that should be acknowledged. One-fifth is a critical mass that can have a significant impact on a social system, including a public school system, if these individuals remain unhappy and dissatisfied.

The remedy for a dissatisfaction rate of one-fifth does not require a total change in the student assignment process, since most students and their parents are satisfied. Population-specific approaches may be necessary to deal with whatever is troubling or troublesome to the 20 percent residual of dissatisfied patrons. In other words, limited rather than universal change is indicated.

Clearly, most parents in Boston do not wish to return to a student assignment process that automatically or mandatorily assigns their children to neighborhood schools. In view of the fact that all neighborhood schools are not effective learning environments, a return to neighborhood schools would compel some students in some neighborhoods to attend less attractive schools. Such a requirement, of course, is unfair. To overcome the unfairness of the past when some students were compelled to attend neighborhood schools that were segregated and unequal is probably one reason why four-fifths of the public school patrons in Boston prefer the controlled choice student assignment plan and the flexibility that it embraces.

Table 3 indicates the reasons first-choice schools were chosen. Interviewees were asked "what was the number one reason you had for preferring your top-choice school over your second-choice school?"

When the two categories--quality of education and kinds of programs are added together, a majority of the parents and their children (55 percent) chose schools for educational reasons. Location which has neighborhood and other implications is the bases for choosing a school as one's #1 choice for only 20 percent of the school patrons. After the first grade, the possibility of walking to school diminishes as a reason for choosing a school as one's top preference. Even in families with first-grade students, the possibility of walking to school is not a priority for a third or more of the families (Bain and Company 1995:12). Thus, Controlled Choice offers the best of alternative possibilities. Families that prefer "walk-to-schools" may fulfill their desires and families that prefer quality schools, even if they are outside their neighborhoods, may choose these.

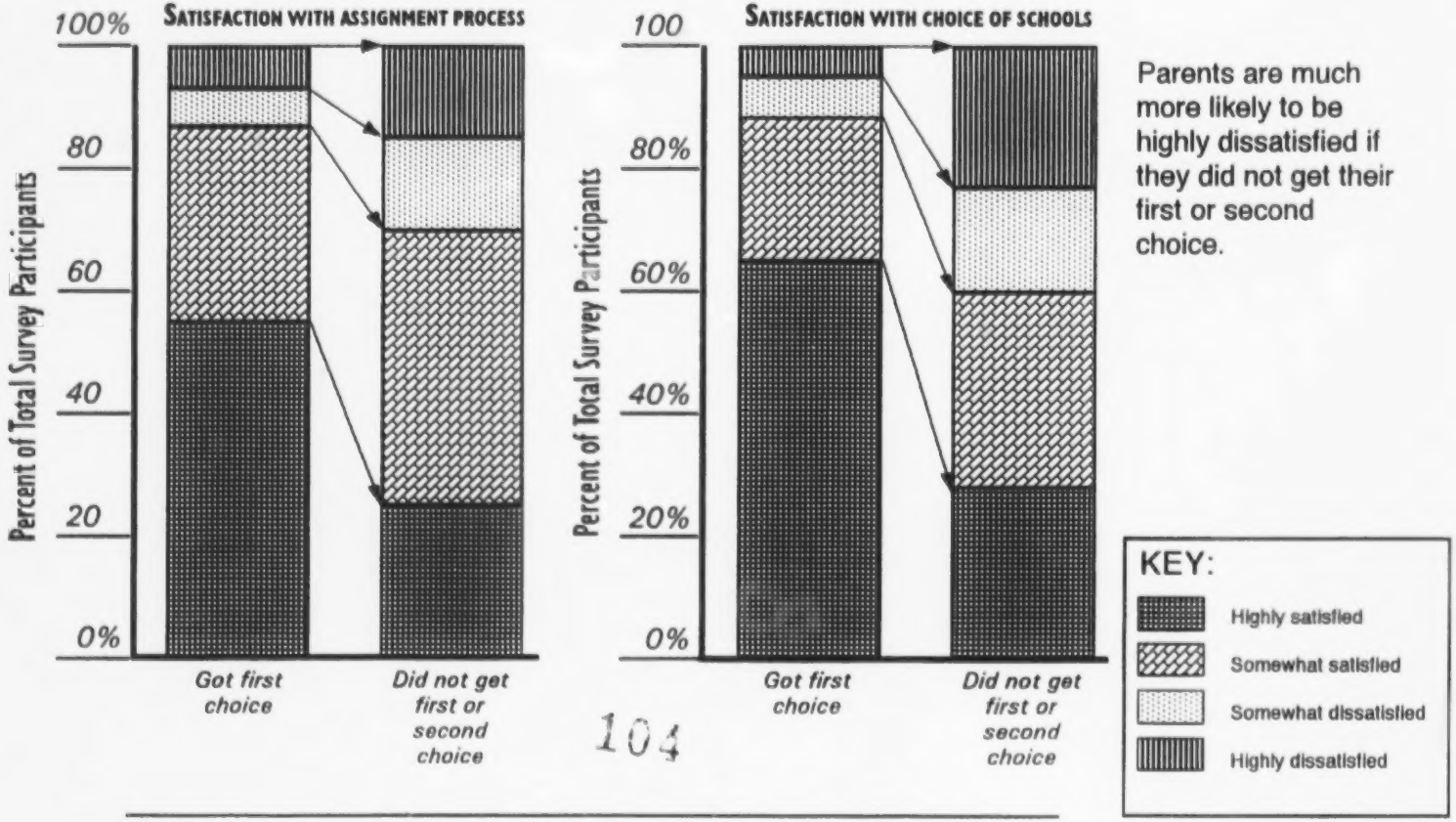
From first grade on through middle school and high school, a challenging educational program including advanced work classes, is the reason most parents and their children choose a school, as seen in Table 4. In terms of subject matter, Table 5 reveals that most parents and their children prefer schools that emphasize computer instruction, reading programs, mathematics and science. The subject matter of instruction seems to be more important than the size of class for most families in their hierarchy of quality education features.

Finally, the Bain and Company study indicates that parent involvement in schools is a quality-enhancement factor but that parent involvement is less sig-

TABLE 2

Boston Public Schools: Parent Survey

Satisfaction vs. Choice Received



Parents are much more likely to be highly dissatisfied if they did not get their first or second choice.

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n=491 *Source: Parent Survey, October 1995* Bain & Company, Inc.

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TABLE 3

Boston Public Schools: Parent Survey

The Reason First-Choice Schools Were Chosen by Students in Kindergarten, 1st, 6th and 9th Grades

REASONS	PERCENT
Quality of Education	44.2
Location	20.4
Safety	11.9
Programs	10.3
Other	13.3
Total	100.0

Source: Bain & Co. Study of Boston Schools, Dec. 1995, p. 6.

nificant than "likable teachers and staff" as seen in Table 4. This finding in the Bain and Company study confirms a finding by James Comer that was derived from his New Haven study–that "teachers deliver the critical service in a school and are most responsible for the success or failure of the school in meeting its mission of student learning and development" (Comer 1980:220).

Summary

The Bain and Company has provided a valuable community service by way of its study of the Controlled Choice Student Assignment Plan in Boston. It is the independent study called for by the *Boston Globe* and was conducted by "a corporate citizen with a reputation for fairness..." (*Boston Globe* 1994:16). In summary, the study demonstrates that parents and their children by and large

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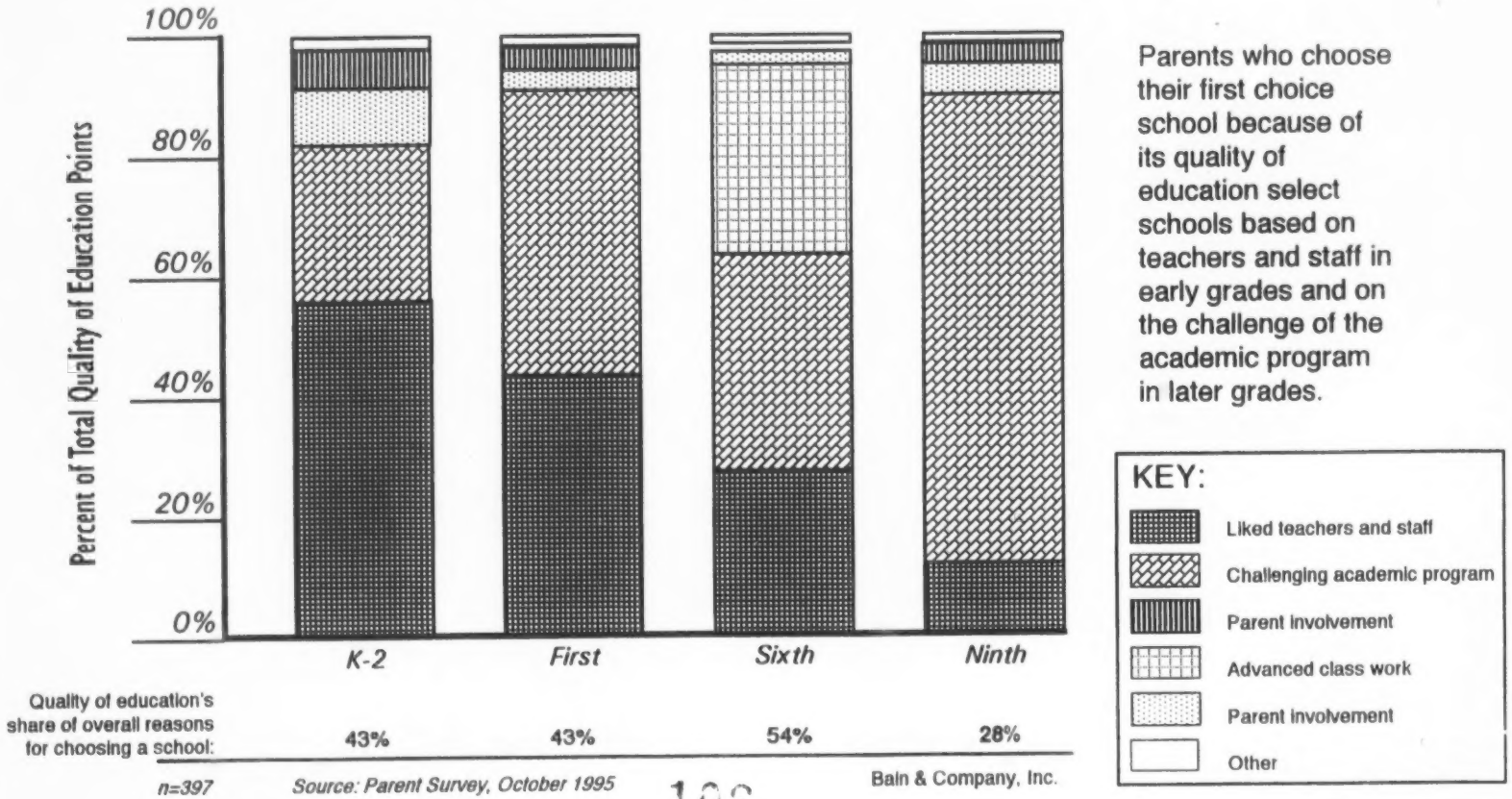
TABLE 4

Boston Public Schools: Parent Survey

Reason for School Preference: Quality of Education



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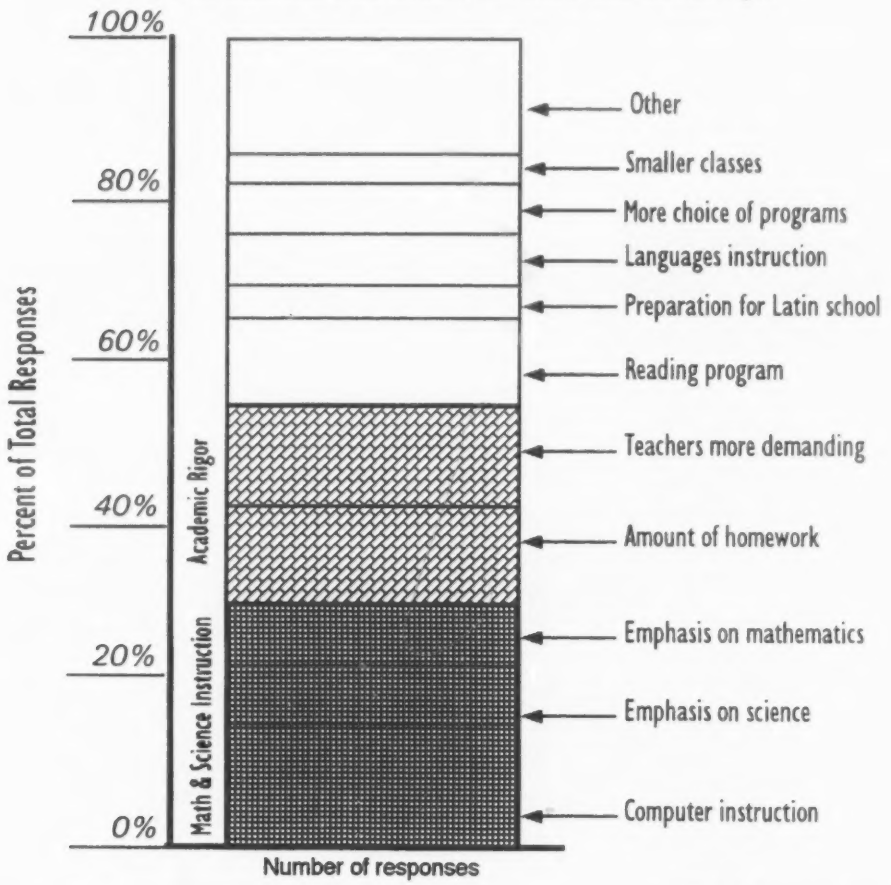
are satisfied with the Controlled Choice Student Assignment Plan in Boston, that they prefer exercising choice in the selection of schools rather than receiving automatic and mandatory assignments to neighborhood schools, that they like schools with strong educational programs and that "likable teachers and staff" as well as a rigorous curriculum in reading, mathematics science and computer instruction are important components in the quality of education.

TABLE 5

Boston Public Schools: Parent Survey

Quality of Education: Challenging Academic Choice

Most parents who seek a more challenging academic program choose their first choice school because they believe it offers better math and science instruction, or more academic rigor



Bain & Company, Inc.

n=106 Question: "What was it about the school's academic program that was more challenging?"

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